

THE
WORKS
OF THE
ENGLISH POETS.
WITH
PREFACES,
BIOGRAPHICAL AND CRITICAL,
BY SAMUEL JOHNSON.

VOLUME THE SECOND.

L O N D O N:

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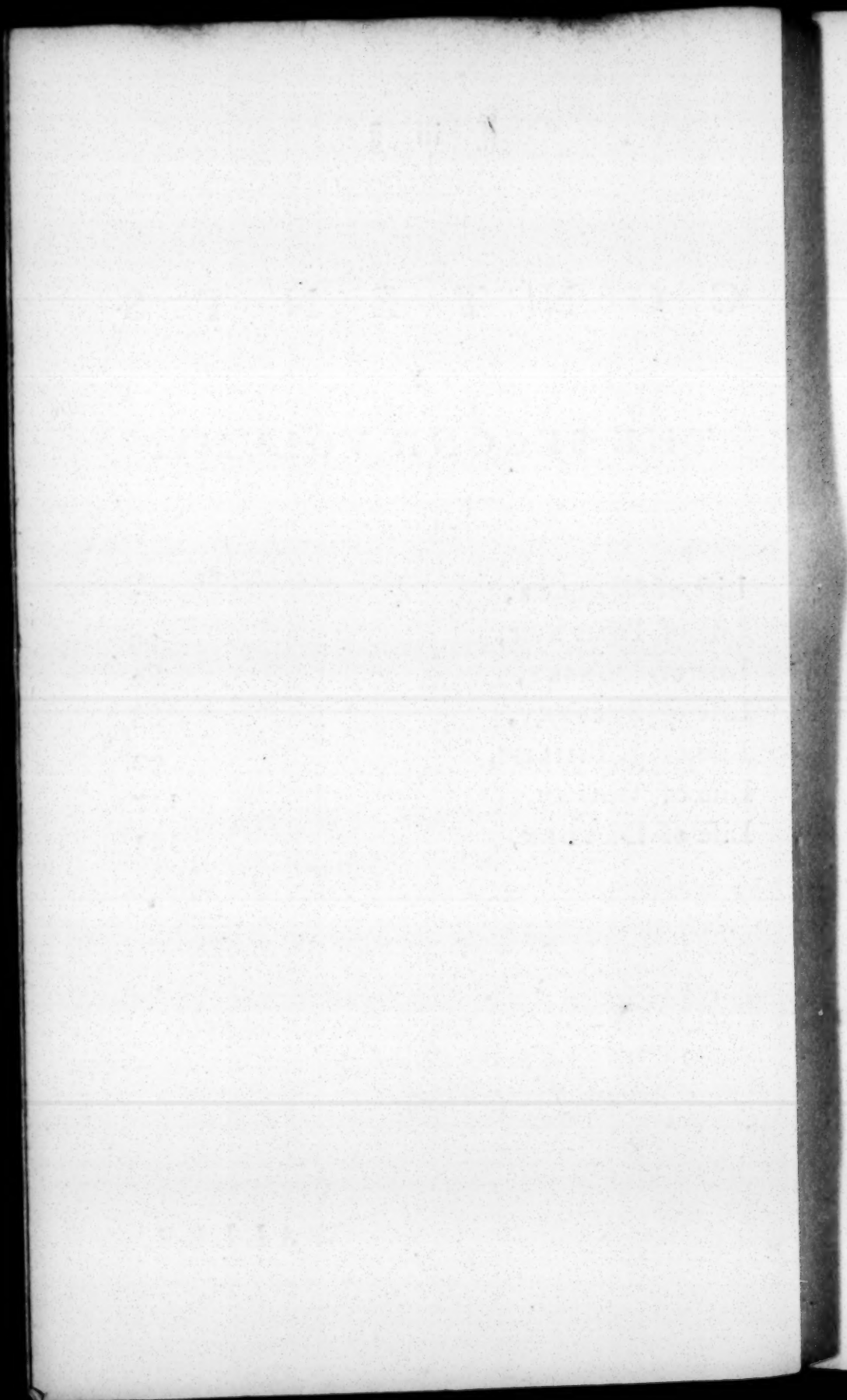
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C O N T E N T S
O F
THE SECOND VOLUME.

Life of WALLER,	I
Life of POMFRET,	79
Life of DORSET,	82
Life of STEPNEY,	88
Life of J. PHILIPS,	92
Life of WALSH,	117
Life of DRYDEN,	121

WALLER.



W A L L E R.

EDMUND WALLER was born on the third of March, 1605, at Colshill in Hertfordshire. His father was Robert Waller, Esquire, of Agmondesham in Buckinghamshire, whose family was originally a branch of the Kentish Wallers; and his mother was the daughter of John Hampden, of Hampden in the same county, and sister to Hampden, the zealot of rebellion.

His father died while he was yet an infant, but left him a yearly income of three thousand five hundred pounds; which, rating together the value of money and the customs of life, we may reckon more than equivalent to ten thousand at the present time.

He was educated, by the care of his mother, at Eaton; and removed afterwards to King's

College in Cambridge. He was sent to parliament in his eighteenth, if not in his sixteenth year, and frequented the court of James the First, where he heard a very remarkable conversation, which the writer of the Life prefixed to his Works, who seems to have been well informed of facts, though he may sometimes err in chronology, has delivered as indubitably certain :

“ He found Dr. Andrews, bishop of Winchester, and Dr. Neale, bishop of Durham, “ standing behind his Majesty’s chair ; and “ there happened something extraordinary,” continues this writer, “ in the conversation “ those prelates had with the king, on which “ Mr. Waller did often reflect. His Majesty “ asked the bishops, “ My Lords, cannot I “ take my subjects money, when I want it, “ without all this formality of parliament?” “ The bishop of Durham readily answered, “ ‘ God forbid, Sir, but you should : you are “ the breath of our nostrils ’ Whereupon the “ King turned and said to the bishop of Winchester, “ Well, my Lord, what say you?” “ ‘ Sir,’ replied the bishop, ‘ I have no skill to “ judge of parliamentary cases.’ The King “ answered,

“ answered, “ No put-offs, my Lord ; answer
 “ me presently.” ‘ Then, Sir,’ said he, ‘ I
 “ think it is lawful for you to take my brother
 “ Neale’s money ; for he offers it.’ Mr. Wal-
 “ ler said, the company was pleased with this
 “ answer, and the wit of it seemed to affect the
 “ King ; for, a certain lord coming in soon
 “ after, his Majesty cried out, “ Oh, my lord,
 “ they say you lig with my Lady.” ‘ No, Sir,’
 “ says his Lordship in confusion ; ‘ but I like
 “ her company, because she has so much wit.’
 “ “ Why then,” says the King, “ do you not
 “ lig with my Lord of Winchester there ?”

Waller’s political and poetical life began nearly together. In his eighteenth year he wrote the poem that appears in his works, on “ the Prince’s Escape at St. Andero :” a piece which justifies the observation made by one of his editors, that he attained, by a felicity like instinct, a style which perhaps will never be obsolete ; and that, “ were we to judge only
 “ by the wording, we could not know what
 “ was wrote at twenty, and what at fourscore.”

His versification was, in his first essay, such as it appears in his last performance. By the perusal of Fairfax’s translation of Tasso, to

which, as * Dryden relates, he confessed himself indebted for the smoothness of his numbers, and by his own nicety of observation, he had already formed such a system of metrical harmony as he never afterwards much needed, or much endeavoured, to improve. Denham corrected his numbers by experience, and gained ground gradually upon the ruggedness of his age, but what was acquired by Denham was inherited by Waller.

The next poem, of which the subject seems to fix the time, is supposed by Mr. Fenton to be the Address to the Queen, which he considers as congratulating her arrival, in Waller's twentieth year. He is apparently mistaken; for the mention of the nation's obligations to her frequent pregnancy, proves that it was written when she had brought many children. We have therefore no date of any other poetical production before that which the murder of the Duke of Buckingham occasioned; the steadiness with which the King received the news in the chapel, deserved indeed to be rescued from oblivion.

* Preface to his Fables. Dr. J.

Neither of these pieces that seem to carry their own dates, could have been the sudden effusion of fancy. In the verses on the Prince's escape, the prediction of his marriage with the princess of France must have been written after the event; in the other, the promises of the King's kindness to the descendants of Buckingham, which could not be properly praised till it had appeared by its effects, shew that time was taken for revision and improvement. It is not known that they were published till they appeared long afterwards with other poems.

Waller was not one of those idolaters of praise who cultivate their minds at the expence of their fortunes. Rich as he was by inheritance, he took care early to grow richer, by marrying Mrs. Banks, a great heiress in the city, whom the interest of the court was employed to obtain for Mr. Crofts. Having brought him a son, who died young, and a daughter, who was afterwards married to Mr. Dormer of Oxfordshire, she died in childbed, and left him a widower of about five and twenty, gay and wealthy, to please himself with another marriage.

Being too young to resist beauty, and probably too vain to think himself resistable, he fixed his heart, perhaps half fondly and half ambitiously, upon the Lady Dorothea Sidney, eldest daughter of the Earl of Leicester, whom he courted by all the poetry in which Sacharissa is celebrated; the name is derived from the Latin appellation of *sugar*, and implies, if it means any thing, a spiritless mildness, and dull good-nature, such as excites rather tenderness than esteem, and such as, though always treated with kindness, is never honoured or admired.

Yet he describes Sacharissa as a sublime predominating beauty, of lofty charms, and imperious influence, on whom he looks with amazement rather than fondness, whose chains he wishes, though in vain, to break, and whose presence is *wine that inflames to madness*.

His acquaintance with this high-born dame gave wit no opportunity of boasting its influence; she was not to be subdued by the powers of verse, but rejected his addresses, it is said, with disdain, and drove him away to solace his disappointment with Amoret or Phillis. She married in 1639 the Earl of Sunderland, who

who died at Newberry in the king's cause; and, in her old age, meeting somewhere with Waller, asked him, when he would again write such verses upon her; "When you are as young, "Madam," said he, "and as handsome, as "you were then."

In this part of his life it was that he was known to Clarendon, among the rest of the men who were eminent in that age for genius and literature; but known so little to his advantage, that they who read his character will not much condemn Sacharissa, that she did not descend from her rank to his embraces, nor think every excellence comprised in wit.

The Lady was, indeed, inexorable; but his uncommon qualifications, though they had no power upon her, recommended him to the scholars and statesmen; and undoubtedly many beauties of that time, however they might receive his love, were proud of his praises. Who they were, whom he dignifies with poetical names, cannot now be known. Amoret, according to Mr. Fenton, was the Lady Sophia Murray. Perhaps by traditions preserved in families more may be discovered.

From the verses written at Penshurst, it has been collected that he diverted his disappointment by a voyage; and his biographers, from his poem on the Whales, think it not improbable that he visited the Bermudas; but it seems much more likely that he should amuse himself with forming an imaginary scene, than that so important an incident, as a visit to America, should have been left floating in conjectural probability.

From his twenty-eighth to his thirty-fifth year, he wrote his pieces on the Reduction of Salée; on the Reparation of St. Paul's; to the King on his Navy; the panegyrick on the Queen Mother; the two poems to the Earl of Northumberland; and perhaps others, of which the time cannot be discovered.

When he had lost all hopes of Sacharissa, he looked round him for an easier conquest, and gained a Lady of the family of Bresse, or Breaux. The time of his marriage is not exactly known. It has not been discovered that his wife was won by his poetry; nor is any thing told of her, but that she brought him many children. He doubtless praised some whom he would have been afraid to marry:

marry, and perhaps married one whom he would have been ashamed to praise. Many qualities contribute to domestick happiness, upon which poetry has no colours to bestow; and many airs and sallies may delight imagination, which he who flatters them never can approve. There are charms made only for distant admiration. No spectacle is nobler than a blaze.

Of this wife, his biographers have recorded that she gave him five sons and eight daughters.

During the long interval of parliament, he is represented as living among those with whom it was most honourable to converse, and enjoying an exuberant fortune with that independence and liberty of speech and conduct which wealth ought always to produce. He was however considered as the kinsman of Hampden, and was therefore supposed by the courtiers not to favour them.

When the parliament was called in 1640, it appeared that Waller's political character had not been mistaken. The King's demand of a supply produced one of those noisy speeches which disaffection and discontent regularly dictate;

tate; a speech filled with hyperbolical complaints of imaginary grievances. "They," says he, "who think themselves already undone, can never apprehend themselves in danger; and they who have nothing left can never give freely." Political truth is equally in danger from the praises of courtiers, and the exclamations of patriots.

He then proceeds to rail at the clergy, being sure at that time of a favourable audience. His topic is such as will always serve its purpose; an accusation of acting and preaching only for preferment: and he exhorts the Commons *carefully to provide for their protection against Pulpit Law.*

It always gratifies curiosity to trace a sentiment. Waller has in this speech quoted Hooker in one passage; and in another has copied him, without quoting. "Religion," says Waller, "ought to be the first thing in our purpose and desires; but that which is first in dignity is not always to precede in order of time; for well-being supposes a being; and the first impediment which men naturally endeavour to remove, is the want of those things without which they cannot subsist. God first
" assigned

“ assigned unto Adam maintenance of life, and
“ gave him a title to the rest of the creatures
“ before he appointed a law to observe.”

“ God first assigned Adam,” says Hooker,
“ maintenance of life, and then appointed
“ him a law to observe.—True it is, that the
“ kingdom of God must be the first thing in
“ our purpose and desires; but inasmuch as a
“ righteous life presupposeth life, inasmuch as
“ to live virtuously it is impossible, except we
“ live; therefore the first impediment which
“ naturally we endeavour to remove is penury,
“ and want of things without which we cannot
“ live.”

The speech is vehement; but the great position, that grievances ought to be redressed before supplies are granted, is agreeable enough to law and reason: nor was Waller, if his biographer may be credited, such an enemy to the King, as not to wish his distresses lightened; for he relates, “ that the King sent particularly
“ to Waller, to second his demand of some
“ subsidies to pay off the army; and Sir Henry
“ Vane objecting against first voting a supply,
“ because the King would not accept unless it
“ came up to his proportion, Mr. Waller spoke
“ earnestly

“ earnestly to Sir Thomas Jermyn, comptrol-
 “ ler of the household, to save his master from
 “ the effects of so bold a falsity; ‘ for, he said,
 “ I am but a country gentleman, and cannot
 “ pretend to know the King’s mind:’ but Sir
 “ Thomas durst not contradict the secretary;
 “ and his son, the Earl of St. Albans, after-
 “ wards told Mr. Waller, that his father’s
 “ cowardice ruined the King.”

In the Long Parliament, which, unhappily for the nation, met Nov. 3, 1640, Waller represented Agmondesham the third time; and was considered by the discontented party as a man sufficiently trusty and acrimonious to be employed in managing the prosecution of Judge Crawley, for his opinion in favour of ship-money; and his speech shews that he did not disappoint their expectations. He was probably the more ardent, as his uncle Hampden had been particularly engaged in the dispute, and, by a sentence which seems generally to be thought unconstitutional, particularly injured.

He was not however a bigot to his party, nor adopted all their opinions. When the great question, whether Episcopacy ought to be abolished,

lished, was debated, he spoke against the innovation so coolly, so reasonably, and so firmly, that it is not without great injury to his name that his speech, which was as follows, has been hitherto omitted in his works :

* “ There is no doubt but the sense of what
 “ this nation had suffered from the present
 “ Bishops hath produced these complaints ;
 “ and the apprehensions men have of suffering
 “ the like, in time to come, make so many
 “ desire the taking away of Episcopacy : but I
 “ conceive it is possible that we may not, now,
 “ take a right measure of the minds of the
 “ people by their petitions ; for, when they
 “ subscribed them, the Bishops were armed
 “ with a dangerous commission of making new
 “ canons, imposing new oaths, and the like ;
 “ but now we have disarmed them of that
 “ power. These petitioners lately did look
 “ upon Episcopacy as a beast armed with horns
 “ and claws ; but now that we have cut and
 “ pared them (and may, if we see cause, yet
 “ reduce it into narrower bounds), it may, per-

* This speech has been retrieved, from a paper printed at that time, by the writers of the Parliamentary History. Dr. J.

“ haps,

“ haps, be more agreeable. Howsoever, if
 “ they be still in passion, it becomes us soberly
 “ to consider the right use and antiquity there-
 “ of; and not to comply further with a ge-
 “ neral desire, than may stand with a general
 “ good.

“ We have already shewed, that episcopacy
 “ and the evils thereof are mingled like water
 “ and oil; we have also, in part, severed
 “ them; but I believe you will find, that our
 “ laws and the present government of the
 “ church are mingled like wine and water; so
 “ inseparable, that the abrogation of, at least,
 “ a hundred of our laws is desired in these pe-
 “ titions. I have often heard a noble answer
 “ of the Lords, commended in this house, to
 “ a proposition of like nature, but of less con-
 “ sequence; they gave no other reason of their
 “ refusal but this, *Nolumus mutare Leges Angliæ*:
 “ it was the bishops who so answered then; and
 “ it would become the dignity and wisdom of
 “ this house to answer the people, now, with a
 “ *Nolumus mutare*.

“ I see some are moved with a number of
 “ hands against the Bishops; which, I confess,
 “ rather inclines me to their defence; for I
 “ look

“ look upon episcopacy as a counterſcarp, or
“ out-work ; which, if it be taken by this af-
“ ſault of the people, and, withall, this myſtery
“ once revealed, *That we muſt deny them nothing*
“ *when they aſk it thus in troops*, we may, in the
“ next place, have as hard a taſk to defend our
“ property, as we have lately had to recover it
“ from the Prerogative. If, by multiplying
“ hands and petitions, they prevail for an
“ equality in things eccleſiaſtical, the next de-
“ mand perhaps may be *Lex Agraria*, the like
“ equality in things temporal.

“ The Roman ſtory tells us, That when the
“ people began to flock about the ſenate, and
“ were more curious to direct and know what
“ was done, than to obey, that Common-
“ wealth ſoon came to ruin : their *Legem ro-*
“ *gare* grew quickly to be a *Legem ferre* : and
“ after, when their legions had found that they
“ could make a Dictator, they never ſuffered
“ the ſenate to have a voice any more in ſuch
“ election.

“ If theſe great innovations proceed, I ſhall
“ expect a flat and level in learning too, as
“ well as in church-preferments : *Honos alit*
“ *Artes*. And though it be true, that grave
“ and

“ and pious men do study for learning-sake,
“ and embrace virtue for itself; yet it is true,
“ that youth, which is the season when learn-
“ ing is gotten, is not without ambition: nor
“ will ever take pains to excel in any thing,
“ when there is not some hope of excelling
“ others in reward and dignity.

“ There are two reasons chiefly alleged
“ against our church-government.

“ First, Scripture, which, as some men
“ think, points out another form.

“ Second, The abuses of the present su-
“ periors.

“ For Scripture, I will not dispute it in this
“ place; but I am confident that, whenever an
“ equal division of lands and goods shall be de-
“ fired, there will be as many places in Scrip-
“ ture found out, which seem to favour that,
“ as there are now alleged against the prelacy
“ or preferment in the church. And, as for
“ abuses, when you are now, in the Re-
“ monstrance told, what this and that poor
“ man hath suffered by the bishops, you may
“ be presented with a thousand instances of
“ poor men that have received hard measure
“ from their landlords; and of worldly goods
“ abused,

“ abused, to the injury of others, and disadvantage of the owners.

“ And therefore, Mr. Speaker, my humble motion is, That we may settle men’s minds herein; and, by a question, declare our resolution, *to reform*, that is, *not to abolish*, *“ Episcopacy.”*

It cannot but be wished that he, who could speak in this manner, had been able to act with spirit and uniformity.

When the Commons began to set the royal authority at open defiance, Waller is said to have withdrawn from the house, and to have returned with the king’s permission; and, when the king set up his standard, he sent him a thousand broad-pieces. He continued, however, to sit in the rebellious conventicle; but “ spoke,” says Clarendon, “ with great sharpness and freedom, which, now there was no danger of being outvoted, was not restrained; and therefore used as an argument against those who were gone upon pretence that they were not suffered to deliver their opinion freely in the house, which could not be believed, when all men knew what liberty Mr. Waller took, and spoke every day with im-

“punity against the sense and proceedings of
“the house.”

Waller, as he continued to sit, was one of the commissioners nominated by the parliament to treat with the king at Oxford; and when they were presented, the King said to him, “Though you are the last, you are not
“the lowest nor the least in my favour.” Whitlock, who, being another of the commissioners, was witness of this kindness, imputes it to the king’s knowledge of the plot, in which Waller appeared afterwards to have been engaged against the parliament. Fenton, with equal probability, believes that this attempt to promote the royal cause arose from his sensibility of the king’s tenderness. Whitlock says nothing of his behaviour at Oxford: he was sent with several others to add pomp to the commission, but was not one of those to whom the trust of treating was imparted.

The engagement, known by the name of Waller’s plot, was soon afterwards discovered. Waller had a brother-in-law, Tomkyns, who was clerk of the Queen’s council, and at the same time had a very numerous acquaintance, and great influence, in the city. Waller and
he,

he, conversing with great confidence, told both their own secrets and those of their friends; and, surveying the wide extent of their conversation, imagined that they found in the majority of all ranks great disapprobation of the violence of the Commons, and unwillingness to continue the war. They knew that many favoured the king, whose fear concealed their loyalty; and many desired peace, though they durst not oppose the clamour for war; and they imagined that if those who had these good intentions could be informed of their own strength, and enabled by intelligence to act together, they might overpower the fury of sedition, by refusing to comply with the ordinance for the twentieth part, and the other taxes levied for the support of the rebel army, and by uniting great numbers in a petition for peace. They proceeded with great caution. Three only met in one place, and no man was allowed to impart the plot to more than two others; so that, if any should be suspected or seized, more than three could not be endangered.

Lord Conway joined in the design, and, Clarendon imagines, incidentally mingled, as

he was a soldier, some martial hopes or projects, which however were only mentioned, the main design being to bring the loyal inhabitants to the knowledge of each other; for which purpose there was to be appointed one in every district, to distinguish the friends of the king, the adherents to the parliament, and the neutrals. How far they proceeded does not appear; the result of their enquiry, as Pym declared*, was, that within the walls, for one that was for the Royalists, there were three against them; but that without the walls, for one that was against them, there were five for them. Whether this was said from knowledge or guess, was perhaps never enquired.

It is the opinion of Clarendon, that in Waller's plan no violence or sanguinary resistance was comprised; that he intended only to abate the confidence of the rebels by publick declarations, and to weaken their powers by an opposition to new supplies. This, in calmer times, and more than this, is done without fear; but such was the acrimony of the commons, that no method of obstructing them was safe.

* Parliamentary History, Vol. II. Dr. J.

About this time another design was formed by Sir Nicholas Crispe, a man of loyalty that deserves perpetual remembrance : when he was a merchant in the city, he gave and procured the king, in his exigences, an hundred thousand pounds ; and, when he was driven from the Exchange, raised a regiment, and commanded it.

Sir Nicholas flattered himself with an opinion, that some provocation would so much exasperate, or some opportunity so much encourage, the King's friends in the city, that they would break out in open resistance, and then would want only a lawful standard, and an authorised commander ; and extorted from the King, whose judgement too frequently yielded to importunity, a commission of array, directed to such as he thought proper to nominate, which was sent to London by the Lady Aubigney. She knew not what she carried, but was to deliver it on the communication of a certain token which Sir Nicholas imparted.

This commission could be only intended to lie ready till the time should require it. To have attempted to raise any forces, would have been certain destruction ; it could be of use

only when the forces should appear. This was, however, an act preparatory to martial hostility. Crispe would undoubtedly have put an end to the session of parliament, had his strength been equal to his zeal; and out of the design of Crispe, which involved very little danger, and that of Waller, which was an act purely civil, they compounded a horrid and dreadful plot.

The discovery of Waller's design is variously related. In "Clarendon's History" it is told, that a servant of Tomkyns, lurking behind the hangings when his master was in conference with Waller, heard enough to qualify him for an informer, and carried his intelligence to Pym. A manuscript, quoted in the "Life of Waller," relates, that "he was betrayed by his sister Price, and her Presbyterian chaplain Mr. Goode, who stole some of his papers; and if he had not strangely dreamed the night before, that his sister had betrayed him, and thereupon burnt the rest of his papers by the fire that was in his chimney, he had certainly lost his life by it." The question cannot be decided. It is not unreasonable to believe that the men in power, receiving

receiving intelligence from the sister, would employ the servant of Tomkyns to listen at the conference, that they might avoid an act so offensive as that of destroying the brother by the sister's testimony.

The plot was published in the most terrifick manner.

On the 31st of May (1643), at a solemn fast, when they were listening to the sermon, a messenger entered the church, and communicated his errand to Pym, who whispered it to others that were placed near him, and then went with them out of the church, leaving the rest in solicitude and amazement. They immediately sent guards to proper places, and that night apprehended Tomkyns and Waller; having yet traced nothing but that letters had been intercepted, from which it appeared that the parliament and the city were soon to be delivered into the hands of the cavaliers.

They perhaps yet knew little themselves, beyond some general and indistinct notices. "But Waller," says Clarendon, "was so confounded with fear, that he confessed whatever he had heard, said, thought, or seen; all that he knew of himself, and all that he suspected

“ of others, without concealing any person, of
“ what degree or quality soever, or any dis-
“ course which he had ever upon any occasion
“ entertained with them; what such and such
“ ladies of great honour, to whom, upon the
“ credit of his wit and great reputation, he had
“ been admitted, had spoke to him in their
“ chambers upon the proceedings in the Houses,
“ and how they had encouraged him to oppose
“ them; what correspondence and intercourse
“ they had with some Ministers of State at
“ Oxford, and how they had conveyed all in-
“ telligence thither.” He accused the Earl of
Portland and Lord Conway as co-operating in
the transaction; and testified that the Earl of
Northumberland had declared himself disposed
in favour of any attempt that might check the
violence of the Parliament, and reconcile them
to the King.

He undoubtedly confessed much, which they
could never have discovered, and perhaps some-
what which they would wish to have been
suppressed; for it is inconvenient, in the con-
flict of factions, to have that disaffection known
which cannot safely be punished.

Tomkins was seized on the same night with
Waller,

Waller, and appears likewise to have partaken of his cowardice; for he gave notice of Crispe's commission of array, of which Clarendon never knew how it was discovered. Tomkyns had been sent with the token appointed, to demand it from Lady Aubigny, and had buried it in his garden, where, by his direction, it was dug up; and thus the rebels obtained, what Clarendon confesses them to have had, the original copy.

It can raise no wonder that they formed one plot out of these two designs, however remote from each other, when they saw the same agent employed in both, and found the commission of array in the hands of him who was employed in collecting the opinions and affections of the people.

Of the plot, thus combined, they took care to make the most. They sent Pym among the citizens, to tell them of their imminent danger, and happy escape; and inform them, that the design was "to seize the Lord Mayor and all the Committee of Militia, and would not spare one of them." They drew up a vow and covenant, to be taken by every member of either house, by which he declared his detestation

tion of all conspiracies against the parliament, and his resolution to detect and oppose them. They then appointed a day of thanksgiving for this wonderful delivery; which shut out, says Clarendon, all doubts whether there had been such a deliverance, and whether the plot was real or fictitious.

On June 11, the Earl of Portland and Lord Conway were committed, one to the custody of the mayor, and the other of the sheriff; but their lands and goods were not seized.

Waller was still to immerse himself deeper in ignominy. The Earl of Portland and Lord Conway denied the charge; and there was no evidence against them but the confession of Waller, of which undoubtedly many would be inclined to question the veracity. With these doubts he was so much terrified, that he endeavoured to persuade Portland to a declaration like his own, by a letter extant in Fenton's edition. "But for me," says he, "you
" had never known any thing of this business,
" which was prepared for another; and there-
" fore I cannot imagine why you should hide
" it so far as to contract your own ruin by
" concealing it, and persisting unreasonably to
" hide

“hide that truth, which, without you, already
“is, and will every day be made more ma-
“nifest. Can you imagine yourself bound in
“honour to keep that secret, which is already
“revealed by another; or possible it should
“still be a secret, which is known to one of
“the other sex?—If you persist to be cruel to
“yourself for their sakes who deserve it not,
“it will nevertheless be made appear, ere long,
“I fear, to your ruin. Surely, if I had the
“happiness to wait on you, I could move you
“to compassionate both yourself and me, who,
“desperate as my case is, am desirous to die
“with the honour of being known to have
“declared the truth. You have no reason to
“contend to hide what is already revealed—
“inconsiderately to throw away yourself, for
“the interest of others, to whom you are less
“obliged than you are aware of.”

This persuasion seems to have had little effect. Portland sent (June 29) a letter to the Lords, to tell them, that he “is in custody,
“as he conceives, without any charge; and
“that, by what Mr. Waller hath threatened
“him with since he was imprisoned, he doth
“apprehend a very cruel, long, and ruinous
“restraint :

“restraint:—He therefore prays, that he may
“not find the effects of Mr. Waller’s threats,
“by a long and close imprisonment; but may
“be speedily brought to a legal trial, and then
“he is confident the vanity and falsehood of
“those informations which have been given
“against him will appear.”

In consequence of this letter, the Lords ordered Portland and Waller to be confronted; when the one repeated his charge, and the other his denial. The examination of the plot being continued (July 1), Thinn, usher of the house of Lords, deposed, that Mr. Waller having had a conference with the Lord Portland in an upper room, Lord Portland said, when he came down, “Do me the favour to tell my Lord
“Northumberland, that Mr. Waller has ex-
“tremely pressed me to save my own life and
“his, by throwing the blame upon the Lord
“Conway and the Earl of Northumbeland.”

Waller, in his letter to Portland, tells him of the reasons which he could urge with resistless efficacy in a personal conference; but he over-rated his own oratory; his vehemence, whether of persuasion or intreaty, was returned with contempt.

One

One of his arguments with Portland is, that the plot is already known to a woman. This woman was doubtless Lady Aubigny, who, upon this occasion, was committed to custody; but who, in reality, when she delivered the commission, knew not what it was.

The parliament then proceeded against the conspirators, and committed their trial to a council of war. Tomkyns and Chaloner were hanged near their own doors. Tomkyns, when he came to die, said it was a *foolish business*; and indeed there seems to have been no hope that it should escape discovery; for though never more than three met at a time, yet a design so extensive must, by necessity, be communicated to many, who could not be expected to be all faithful, and all prudent. Chaloner was attended at his execution by Hugh Peters. His crime was, that he had commission to raise money for the King; but it appears not that the money was to be expended upon the advancement of either Crispe or Waller's plot.

The Earl of Northumberland, being too great for prosecution, was only once examined before the Lords. The Earl of Portland and
Lord

Lord Conway persisting to deny the charge, and no testimony but Waller's yet appearing against them, were, after a long imprisonment, admitted to bail. Hassel, the King's messenger, who carried the letters to Oxford, died the night before his trial. Hampden escaped death, perhaps by the interest of his family; but was kept in prison to the end of his life. They whose names were inserted in the commission of array were not capitally punished, as it could not be proved that they had consented to their own nomination; but they were considered as malignants, and their estates were seized.

“Waller, though confessedly,” says Clarendon, “the most guilty, with incredible diffimulation affected such a remorse of conscience, that his trial was put off, out of Christian compassion, till he might recover his understanding.” What use he made of this interval, with what liberality and success he distributed flattery and money, and how, when he was brought (July 4) before the House, he confessed and lamented, and submitted and implored, may be read in the History of the Rebellion (B. vii.). The speech,
to

to which Clarendon ascribes the preservation of his *dear-bought life*, is inserted in his works. The great historian, however, seems to have been mistaken in relating that *he prevailed* in the principal part of his supplication, *not to be tried by a Council of War*; for, according to Whitlock, he was by expulsion from the House abandoned to the tribunal which he so much dreaded, and, being tried and condemned, was reprieved by Essex; but after a year's imprisonment, in which time resentment grew less acrimonious, paying a fine of ten thousand pounds, he was permitted to *recollect himself in another country*.

Of his behaviour in this part of his life, it is not necessary to direct the reader's opinion. "Let us not," says his last ingenious biographer, "condemn him with untempered severity, because he was not a prodigy which the world hath seldom seen, because his character included not the poet, the orator, and the hero."

For the place of his exile he chose France, and stayed some time at Roan, where his daughter Margaret was born, who was afterwards his favourite, and his amanuensis. He then removed

removed to Paris, where he lived with great splendor and hospitality; and from time to time amused himself with poetry, in which he sometimes speaks of the rebels, and their usurpation, in the natural language of an honest man.

At last it became necessary, for his support, to sell his wife's jewels; and being reduced, as he said, at last *to the rump-jewel*, he solicited from Cromwell permission to return, and obtained it by the interest of colonel Scroop, to whom his sister was married. Upon the remains of a fortune, which the danger of his life had very much diminished, he lived at Hall-barn, a house built by himself, very near to Beaconsfield, where his mother resided. His mother, though related to Cromwell and Hampden, was zealous for the royal cause, and, when Cromwell visited her, used to reproach him; he, in return, would throw a napkin at her, and say he would not dispute with his aunt; but finding in time that she acted for the king, as well as talked, he made her a prisoner to her own daughter, in her own house. If he would do any thing, he could not do less.

Cromwell,

Cromwell, now protector, received Waller, as his kinsman, to a familiar conversation. Waller, as he used to relate, found him sufficiently versed in ancient history; and when any of his enthusiastick friends came to advise or consult him, could sometimes overhear him discoursing in the cant of the times: but, when he returned, he would say, "Cousin Waller, "I must talk to these men in their own way:" and resumed the common style of conversation.

He repaid the Protector for his favours (1654) by the famous panegyrick, which has been always considered as the first of his poetical productions. His choice of encomiastic topicks is very judicious; for he considers Cromwell in his exaltation, without enquiring how he attained it; there is consequently no mention of the rebel or the regicide. All the former part of his hero's life is veiled with shades; and nothing is brought to view but the chief, the governor, the defender of England's honour, and the enlarger of her dominion. The act of violence by which he obtained the supreme power is lightly treated, and decently justified. It was certainly to be desired that the detestable band should be dis-

solved, which had destroyed the church, murdered the King, and filled the nation with tumult and oppression; yet Cromwell had not the right of dissolving them, for all that he had before done could be justified only by supposing them invested with lawful authority. But combinations of wickedness would overwhelm the world by the advantage which licentious principles afford, did not those, who have long practised perfidy, grow faithless to each other.

In the poem on the war with Spain are some passages at least equal to the best parts of the panegyrick; and, in the conclusion, the poet ventures yet a higher flight of flattery, by recommending royalty to Cromwell and the nation. Cromwell was very desirous, as appears from his conversation, related by Whitlock, of adding the title to the power of monarchy, and is supposed to have been withheld from it partly by fear of the army, and partly by fear of the laws, which, when he should govern by the name of King, would have restrained his authority. When therefore a deputation was solemnly sent to invite him to the Crown, he, after a long conference, refused

fused it, but is said to have fainted in his coach, when he parted from them.

The poem on the death of the Protector seems to have been dictated by real veneration for his memory. Dryden and Sprat wrote on the same occasion; but they were young men, struggling into notice, and hoping for some favour from the ruling party. Waller had little to expect: he had received nothing but his pardon from Cromwell, and was not likely to ask any thing from those who should succeed him.

Soon afterwards the Restauration supplied him with another subject: and he exerted his imagination, his elegance, and his melody, with equal alacrity, for Charles the Second. It is not possible to read, without some contempt and indignation, poems of the same author, ascribing the highest degree of *power and piety* to Charles the First, then transferring the same *power and piety* to Oliver Cromwell, now inviting Oliver to take the Crown, and then congratulating Charles the Second on his recovered right. Neither Cromwell nor Charles could value his testimony as the effect of conviction, or receive his praises as effusions of

reverence ; they could consider them but as the labour of invention, and the tribute of dependence.

Poets, indeed, profess fiction ; but the legitimate end of fiction is the conveyance of truth ; and he that has flattery ready for all whom the vicissitudes of the world happen to exalt, must be scorned as a prostituted mind, that may retain the glitter of wit, but has lost the dignity of virtue.

The Congratulation was considered as inferior in poetical merit to the Panegyrick ; and it is reported, that, when the king told Waller of the disparity, he answered, ‘ Poets, Sir, succeed better in fiction than in truth.’

The Congratulation is indeed not inferior to the Panegyrick, either by decay of genius, or for want of diligence ; but because Cromwell had done much, and Charles had done little. Cromwell wanted nothing to raise him to heroic excellence but virtue ; and virtue his poet thought himself at liberty to supply. Charles had yet only the merit of struggling without success, and suffering without despair. A life of escapes and indigence could supply poetry with no splendid images.

In

In the first parliament summoned by Charles the Second (March 8, 1661), Waller sat for Hastings in Suffex, and served for different places in all the parliaments of that reign. In a time when fancy and gaiety were the most powerful recommendations to regard, it is not likely that Waller was forgotten. He passed his time in the company that was highest, both in rank and wit, from which even his obstinate sobriety did not exclude him. Though he drank water, he was enabled by his fertility of mind to heighten the mirth of Bacchanalian assemblies; and Mr. Saville said, that "no man in England should keep him company without drinking but Ned Waller."

The praise given him by St. Evremond is a proof of his reputation; for it was only by his reputation that he could be known, as a writer; to a man who, though he lived a great part of a long life upon an English pension, never condescended to understand the language of the nation that maintained him.

In the parliament, "he was," says Burnet, "the delight of the house, and though old said "the liveliest things of any among them." This, however, is said in his account of the

year seventy-five, when Waller was only seventy. His name as a speaker occurs often in Grey's Collections; but I have found no extracts that can be more quoted as exhibiting fallies of gaiety than cogency of argument.

He was of such consideration, that his remarks were circulated and recorded. When the duke of York's influence was high, both in Scotland and England, it drew, says Burnet, a lively reflection from Waller the celebrated wit. "He said, the house of commons had resolved that the duke should not reign after the king's death; but the king, in opposition to them, had resolved that he should reign even in his life." If there appear no extraordinary *liveliness* in this *remark*, yet its reception proves the speaker to have been a *celebrated wit*, to have had a name which the men of wit were proud of mentioning.

He did not suffer his reputation to die gradually away, which may easily happen in a long life, but renewed his claim to poetical distinction from time to time, as occasions were offered, either by publick events or private incidents; and, contenting himself with the influence of his muse, or loving quiet better than
influence,

fluence, he never accepted any office of magistracy.

He was not, however, without some attention to his fortune; for he asked from the King (in 1665) the provostship of Eaton College, and obtained it; but Clarendon refused to put the seal to the grant, alleging that it could be held only by a clergyman. It is known that Sir Henry Wotton qualified himself for it by Deacon's orders.

To this opposition, the *Biographia* imputes the violence and acrimony with which Waller joined Buckingham's faction in the prosecution of Clarendon. The motive was illiberal and dishonest, and shewed that more than sixty years had not been able to teach him morality. His accusation is such as conscience can hardly be supposed to dictate without the help of malice. "We were to be governed by janizaries
"instead of parliaments, and are in danger
"from a worse plot than that of the fifth of
"November; then, if the Lords and commons had been destroyed, there had been a
"succession; but here both had been destroyed
"for ever." This is the language of a man who is glad of an opportunity to rail, and

ready to sacrifice truth to interest at one time and to anger at another.

A year after the Chancellor's banishment, another vacancy gave him encouragement for another petition which the King referred to the council, who, after hearing the question argued by lawyers for three days, determined that the office could be held only by a clergyman, according to the act of uniformity, since the provosts had always received institution, as for a parsonage, from the bishops of Lincoln. The King then said, he could not break the Law which he had made: and Dr. Zachary Cradock, famous for a single sermon, at most for two sermons, was chosen by the Fellows.

That he asked any thing more is not known; it is certain that he obtained nothing, though he continued obsequious to the court through the rest of Charles's reign.

At the accession of King James (in 1685) he was chosen for parliament, being then fourscore, at Saltash in Cornwall; and wrote a *Presage of the Downfall of the Turkish Empire*, which he presented to the King on his birthday. It is remarked, by his commentator Fenton, that in reading Tasso he had early imbibed

imbibed a veneration for the heroes of the Holy War, and a zealous enmity to the Turks, which never left him. James, however, having soon after begun what he thought a holy war at home, made haste to put all molestation of the Turks out of his power.

James treated him with kindness and familiarity, of which instances are given by the writer of his life. One day, taking him into the closet, the King asked him how he liked one of the pictures: "My eyes," said Waller, "are dim, and I do not know it." The king said, it was the princess of Orange. "She is," said Waller, "like the greatest woman in the world." The King asked who was that? and was answered, Queen Elizabeth. "I wonder," said the King, "you should think so; but I must confess she had a wise council." "And, Sir," said Waller, "did you ever know a fool chuse a wise one?" Such is the story, which I once heard of some other man. Pointed anxiums, and acute replies, fly loose about the world, and are assigned successively to those whom it may be the fashion to celebrate.

When

When the King knew that he was about to marry his daughter to Dr. Birch, a clergyman, he ordered a French gentleman to tell him, that "the King wondered he could think of marrying his daughter to a falling church." "The King," says Waller, "does me great honour, in taking notice of my domestick affairs; but I have lived long enough to observe that this falling church has got a trick of rising again."

He took notice to his friends of the King's conduct; and said, that, "he would be left like a whale upon the strand." Whether he was privy to any of the transactions which ended in the Revolution, is not known. His heir joined the prince of Orange.

Having now attained an age beyond which the laws of nature seldom suffer life to be extended, otherwise than by a future state, he seems to have turned his mind upon preparation for the decisive hour, and therefore consecrated his poetry to devotion. It is pleasing to discover that his piety was without weakness; that his intellectual powers continued vigorous; and that the lines which he composed
when

when *he, for age, could neither read nor write,* are not inferior to the effusions of his youth.

Towards the decline of life, he bought a small house, with a little land, at Colshill; and said, "he should be glad to die, like the stag, where he was roused." This, however, did not happen. When he was at Beaconsfield, he found his legs grow tumid: he went to Windsor, where Sir Charles Scarborough then attended the King, and requested him, as both a friend and physician, to tell him, *what that swelling meant.* "Sir," answered Scarborough, "your blood will run no longer." Waller repeated some lines of Virgil, and went home to die.

As the disease increased upon him, he composed himself for his departure; and calling upon Dr. Birch to give him the holy sacrament, he desired his children to take it with him, and made an earnest declaration of his faith in Christianity. It now appeared, what part of his conversation with the great could be remembered with delight. He related, that being present when the duke of Buckingham talked profanely before King Charles, he said to him, "My Lord, I am a
"great

“ great deal older than your grace, and have,
“ I believe, heard more arguments for atheism
“ than ever your grace did; but I have lived
“ long enough to see there is nothing in them;
“ and so, I hope, your grace will.”

He died October 21, 1687, and was buried at Beaconsfield, with a monument erected by his son's executors, for which Rymer wrote the inscription, and which I hope is now rescued from dilapidation.

He left several children by his second wife; of whom, his daughter was married to Dr. Birch. Benjamin, the eldest son, was disinherited, and sent to New Jersey, as wanting common understanding. Edmund, the second son, inherited the estate, and represented Agmondesham in parliament, but at last turned Quaker. William, the third son, was a merchant in London. Stephen, the fourth, was an eminent Doctor of Laws, and one of the Commissioners for the Union. There is said to have been a fifth, of whom no account has descended.

The character of Waller, both moral and intellectual, has been drawn by Clarendon, to whom he was familiarly known, with nicety, which

which certainly none to whom he was not known can presume to emulate. It is therefore inserted here, with such remarks as others have supplied; after which, nothing remains but a critical examination of his poetry.

“Edmund Waller,” says Clarendon, “was
“born to a very fair estate, by the parsimony,
“or frugality, of a wise father and mother:
“and he thought it so commendable an advantage,
“that he resolved to improve it with
“his utmost care, upon which in his nature
“he was too much intent; and, in order to
“that, he was so much reserved and retired,
“that he was scarce ever heard of, till by his
“address and dexterity he had gotten a very
“rich wife in the city, against all the recommendation
“and countenance and authority of
“the Court, which was thoroughly engaged
“on the behalf of Mr. Crofts; and which used
“to be successful in that age, against any opposition.
“He had the good fortune to have
“an alliance and friendship with Dr. Morley,
“who had assisted and instructed him in the
“reading many good books, to which his natural
“parts and promptitude inclined him,
“especially the poets; and at the age when
“other

“ other men used to give over writing verses
“ (for he was near thirty years when he first
“ engaged himself in that exercise, at least,
“ that he was known to do so), he surprised
“ the town with two or three pieces of that
“ kind; as if a tenth Muse had been newly
“ born to cherish drooping poetry. The Doc-
“ tor at that time brought him into that com-
“ pany, which was most celebrated for good
“ conversation; where he was received and
“ esteemed, with great applause and respect.
“ He was a very pleasant discourser, in earnest
“ and in jest, and therefore very grateful to all
“ kind of company, where he was not the less
“ esteemed for being very rich.

“ He had been even nursed in parliaments,
“ where he sat when he was very young; and
“ so, when they were resumed again (after a
“ long intermission), he appeared in those as-
“ semblies with great advantage; having a
“ graceful way of speaking, and by thinking
“ much on several arguments (which his tem-
“ per and complexion, that had much of me-
“ lancholic, inclined him to), he seemed often
“ to speak upon the sudden, when the occasion
“ had only administered the opportunity of say-
“ ing

“ing what he had thoroughly considered,
“which gave a great lustre to all he said;
“which yet was rather of delight than weight.
“There needs no more be said to extol the
“excellence and power of his wit, and plea-
“santness of his conversation, than that it was
“of magnitude enough to cover a world of
“very great faults; that is, so to cover them, that
“they were not taken notice of to his reproach;
“viz. a narrowness in his nature to the lowest
“degree; an abjectness and want of courage to
“support him in any virtuous undertaking,
“an insinuation and servile flattery to the
“height, the vainest and most imperious na-
“ture could be contented with; that it pre-
“served and won his life from those who most
“resolved to take it, and in an occasion in
“which he ought to have been ambitious to
“have lost it; and then preserved him again,
“from the reproach, and contempt that was
“due to him, for so preserving it, and for vin-
“dicating it at such a price; that it had power
“to reconcile him to those, whom he had most
“offended and provoked; and continued to his
“age with that rare felicity, that his company
“was acceptable, where his spirit was odious;
“and

“and he was at least pitied, where he was most
“detested.”

Such is the account of Clarendon ; on which
it may not be improper to make some re-
marks.

“He was very little known till he had ob-
“tained a rich wife in the city.”

He obtained a rich wife about the age of
three-and-twenty ; an age before which few
men are conspicuous much to their advantage.
He was known, however, in parliament and
at court ; and, if he spent part of his time in
privacy, it is not unreasonable to suppose, that
he endeavoured the improvement of his mind
as well as of his fortune.

That Clarendon might misjudge the motive
of his retirement is the more probable, because
he has evidently mistaken the commencement
of his poetry, which he supposes him not to
have attempted before thirty. As his first
pieces were perhaps not printed, the succession
of his compositions was not known ; and
Clarendon, who cannot be imagined to have
been very studious of poetry, did not rectify
his first opinion by consulting Waller's book.

Clarendon

Clarendon observes, that he was introduced to the wits of the age by Dr. Morley; but the writer of his Life relates that he was already among them, when, hearing a noise in the street, and enquiring the cause, they found a son of Ben Jonson under an arrest. This was Morley, whom Waller set free at the expence of one hundred pounds, took him into the country as director of his studies, and then procured him admission into the company of the friends of literature. Of this fact, Clarendon had a nearer knowledge than the biographer, and is therefore more to be credited.

The account of Waller's parliamentary eloquence is seconded by Burnet, who, though he calls him "the delight of the house," adds, that "he was only concerned to say that, "which should make him be applauded, he "never laid the business of the House to heart, "being a vain and empty though a witty "man."

Of his insinuation and flattery it is not unreasonable to believe that the truth is told. Ascham, in his elegant description of those whom in modern language we term Wits, says, that they are *open flatterers, and privy mockers.*

mockers. Waller shewed a little of both, when, upon sight of the Duchefs of Newcastle's verses on the death of a Stag, he declared that he would give all his own compositions to have written them; and, being charged with the exorbitance of his adulation, answered, that "nothing was too much to be given, that a lady might be saved from the disgrace of such a vile performance." This however was no very mischievous or very unusual deviation from truth: had his hypocrisy been confined to such transactions, he might have been forgiven, though not praised; for who forbears to flatter an author or a lady?

Of the laxity of his political principles, and the weakness of his resolution, he experienced the natural effect, by losing the esteem of every party. From Cromwell he had only his recall; and from Charles the Second, who delighted in his company, he obtained only the pardon of his relation Hampden, and the safety of Hampden's son.

As far as conjecture can be made from the whole of his writing, and his conduct, he was habitually and deliberately a friend to monarchy. His deviation towards democracy proceeded

ceeded from his connection with Hampden, for whose sake he prosecuted Crawley with great bitterness: and the invective which he pronounced on that occasion was so popular, that twenty thousand copies are said by his biographer to have been sold in one day.

It is confessed that his faults still left him many friends, at least many companions. His convivial power of pleasing is universally acknowledged; but those who conversed with him intimately, found him not only passionate, especially in his old age, but resentful; so that the interposition of friends was sometimes necessary.

His wit and his poetry naturally connected him with the polite writers of his time: he was joined with Lord Buckhurst in the translation of Corneille's Pompey; and is said to have added his help to that of Cowley in the original draught of the Rehearsal.

The care of his fortune, which Clarendon imputes to him in a degree little less than criminal, was either not constant or not successful; for, having inherited a patrimony of three thousand five hundred pounds a year in the time of James the First, and augmented it

at least by one wealthy marriage, he left, about the time of the Revolution, an income of not more than twelve or thirteen hundred; which, when the different value of money is reckoned, will be found perhaps not more than a fourth part of what he once possessed.

Of this diminution, part was the consequence of the gifts which he was forced to scatter, and the fine which he was condemned to pay at the detection of his plot; and if his estate, as is related in his Life, was sequestered, he had probably contracted debts when he lived in exile; for we are told, that at Paris he lived in splendor, and was the only Englishman, except the Lord St. Albans, that kept a table.

His unlucky plot compelled him to sell a thousand a year; of the waste of the rest there is no account, except that he is confessed by his biographer to have been a bad œconomist. He seems to have deviated from the common practice; to have been a hoarder in his first years, and a squanderer in his last.

Of his course of studies, or choice of books, nothing is known more than that he professed himself unable to read Chapman's translation

of

of Homer without rapture. His opinion concerning the duty of a poet is contained in his declaration, that "he would blot from his works any line that did not contain some motive to virtue."

THE characters, by which Waller intended to distinguish his writings, are spriteliness and dignity; in his smaller pieces, he endeavours to be gay; in the larger to be great. Of his airy and light productions, the chief source is gallantry, that attentive reverence of female excellence, which has descended to us from the Gothic ages. As his poems are commonly occasional, and his addressees personal, he was not so liberally supplied with grand as with soft images; for beauty is more easily found than magnanimity.

The delicacy, which he cultivated, restrains him to a certain nicety and caution, even when he writes upon the slightest matter. He has, therefore, in his whole volume, nothing burlesque, and seldom any thing ludicrous or familiar. He seems always to do his best; though his subjects are often unworthy of his care. It is not easy to think without some

contempt on an author, who is growing illustrious in his own opinion by verses, at one time, "To a Lady, who can do any thing, "but sleep, when she pleases." At another, "To a Lady, who can sleep, when she pleases." Now, "To a Lady, on her passing through a crowd of people." Then, "On a braid of divers colours woven by four Ladies:" "On a tree cut in paper:" or, "To a Lady, from whom he received the copy of verses on the paper-tree, which, for many years, had been missing."

Genius now and then produces a lucky trifle. We still read the *Dove* of Anacreon, and *Sparrow* of Catullus; and a writer naturally pleases himself with a performance, which owes nothing to the subject. But compositions merely pretty have the fate of other pretty things, and are quitted in time for something useful; they are flowers fragrant and fair, but of short duration; or they are blossoms to be valued only as they foretell fruits.

Among Waller's little poems are some, which their excellency ought to secure from oblivion; as, *To Amoret*, comparing the different modes of regard with which he looks on her

her and *Sacharissa*; and the verses *On Love* that begin, *Anger in hasty words or blows*.

In others he is not equally successful; sometimes his thoughts are deficient, and sometimes his expression.

The numbers are not always musical; as,

Fair Venus, in thy soft arms

The god of rage confine;

For thy whispers are the charms

Which only can divert his fierce design.

What though he frown, and to tumult do incline;

Thou the flame

Kindled in his breast canst tame

With that snow which unmelted lies on thine.

He seldom indeed fetches an amorous sentiment from the depths of science; his thoughts are for the most part easily understood, and his images such as the superficies of nature readily supplies; he has a just claim to popularity, because he writes to common degrees of knowledge, and is free at least from philosophical pedantry, unless perhaps the end of a song *to the Sun* may be excepted, in which he is too much a Copernican. To which may be added the simile of the *Palm* in the verses *on her passing*

E 4 through

through a crowd; and a line in a more serious poem on the *Restoration*, about vipers and treacle, which can only be understood by those who happen to know the composition of the *Theriaca*.

His thoughts are sometimes hyperbolical, and his images unnatural:

— The plants admire,
No less than those of old did Orpheus' lyre;
If she sit down, with tops all tow'rds her bow'd;
They round about her into arbours crowd:
Or if she walks, in even ranks they stand,
Like some wall-marshal'd and obsequious band.

In another place;

While in the park I sing, the listening deer
Attend my passion, and forget to fear:
When to the beeches I report my flame,
'They bow their heads, as if they felt the same.
'To gods appealing, when I reach their bowers,
With loud complaints they answer me in showers.
'To thee a wild and cruel soul is given,
More deaf than trees, and prouder than the heaven!

On the head of a Stag:

O fertile head! which every year
Could such a crop of wonder bear!

The

The teeming earth did never bring
 So soon, so hard, so huge a thing:
 Which might it never have been cast,
 Each year's growth added to the last,
 These lofty branches had supply'd
 The Earth's bold son's prodigious pride:
 Heaven with these engines had been scal'd,
 When mountains heap'd on mountains fail'd.

Sometimes having succeeded in the first part,
 he makes a feeble conclusion. In the song of
 "Sacharissa's and Amoret's Friendship," the
 two last stanzas ought to have been omitted.

His images of gallantry are not always in
 the highest degree delicate.

Then shall my love this doubt displace,
 And gain such trust that I may come
 And banquet sometimes on thy face,
 But make my constant meals at home.

Some applications may be thought too re-
 mote and unsequential: as in the verses on
 the *Lady dancing*:

The sun in figures such as these,
 Joys with the moon to play:
 To the sweet strains they advance,
 Which do result from their own spheres;

As

As this nymph's dance
Moves with the numbers which she hears.

Sometimes a thought, which might perhaps
fill a distich, is expanded and attenuated till it
grows weak and almost evanescent.

Chloris! since first our calm of peace
Was frighted hence, this good we find,
Your favours with your fears increase,
And growing mischiefs make you kind.
So the fair tree, which still preserves
Her fruit, and state, while no wind blows,
In storms from that uprightness swerves;
And the glad earth about her strows
With treasure from her yielding boughs.

His images are not always distinct; as, in
the following passage, he confounds *Love* as a
person with *love* as a passion:

Some other nymphs, with colours faint,
And pencil slow, may Cupid paint,
And a weak heart in time destroy;
She has a stamp, and prints the Boy:
Can, with a single look, inflame
The coldest breast, the rudest tame.

His fallies of casual flattery are sometimes
elegant and happy, as that *in return for the Sil-*

ver Pen; and sometimes empty and trifling, as that *upon the Card torn by the Queen*. There are a few lines *written in the Dutcheſs's Taſſo*, which he is ſaid by Fenton to have kept a ſummer under correction. It happened to Waller, as to others, that his ſucceſs was not always in proportion to his labour.

Of theſe petty compositions, neither the beauties nor the faults deſerve much attention. The amorous verſes have this to recommend them, that they are leſs hyperbolical than thoſe of ſome other poets. Waller is not always at the laſt gasp; he does not die of a frown, nor live upon a ſmile. There is, however, too much love, and too many trifles. Little things are made too important; and the Empire of Beauty is represented as exerting its influence further than can be allowed by the multiplicity of human paſſions, and the variety of human wants. Such books, therefore, may be conſidered as ſhewing the world under a falſe appearance, and, ſo far as they obtain credit from the young and unexperienced, as miſleading expectation, and miſguiding practice.

Of

Of his nobler and more weighty performances, the greater part is panegyrical; for of praise he was very lavish, as is observed by his imitator, Lord Lansdowne:

No satyr stalks within the hallow'd ground,	}
But queens and heroines, kings and gods abound;	
Glory and arms and love are all the sound.	

In the first poem, on the danger of the Prince on the coast of Spain, there is a puerile and ridiculous mention of Arion at the beginning; and the last paragraph, on the *Cable*, is in part ridiculously mean, and in part ridiculously tumid. The poem, however, is such as may be justly praised, without much allowance for the state of our poetry and language at that time.

The two next poems are upon the King's *behaviour at the death of* Buckingham, and upon his *Navy*.

He has, in the first, used the pagan deities with great propriety:

'Twas want of such a precedent as this
Made the old heathen frame their gods amiss.

In

In the poem on the Navy, those lines are very noble, which suppose the King's power secure against a second Deluge; so noble, that it were almost criminal to remark the mistake of *centre* for *surface*, or to say that the empire of the sea would be worth little if it were not that the waters terminate in land.

The poem upon Sallee has forcible sentiments; but the conclusion is feeble. That on the Repairs of St. Paul's has something vulgar and obvious; such as the mention of Amphion; and something violent and harsh, as

So all our minds with his conspire to grace
The Gentiles' great apostle, and deface
Those state-obscuring sheds, that like a chain
Seem'd to confine, and fetter him again:
Which the glad saint shakes off at his command,
As once the viper from his sacred hand.
So joys the aged oak, when we divide
The creeping ivy from his injur'd side.

Of the two last couplets, the first is extravagant, and the second mean.

His praise of the Queen is too much exaggerated; and the thought, that she "saves lovers, by cutting off hope, as gangrenes are
"cured

“cured by lopping the limb,” presents nothing to the mind but disgust and horror.

Of the *Battle of the Summer Islands*, it seems not easy to say whether it is intended to raise terror or merriment. The beginning is too splendid for jest, and the conclusion too light for seriousness. The versification is studied, the scenes are diligently displayed, and the images artfully amplified; but as it ends neither in joy nor sorrow, it will scarcely be read a second time.

The *Panegyrick* upon Cromwell has obtained from the publick a very liberal dividend of praise, which however cannot be said to have been unjustly lavished; for such a series of verses had rarely appeared before in the English language. Of the lines some are grand, some are graceful, and all are musical. There is now and then a feeble verse, or a trifling thought; but its great fault is the choice of its hero.

The poem of *The War with Spain* begins with lines more vigorous and striking than Waller is accustomed to produce. The succeeding parts are variegated with better passages and worse. There is something too far-fetched

fetched in the comparison of the Spaniards drawing the English on, by saluting St. Lucar with cannon, *to lamb awake ning the lion by bleating*. The fate of the Marquis and his Lady, who were burnt in their ship, would have moved more, had the poet not made him die like the Phœnix, because he had spices about him, nor expressed their affection and their end by a conceit at once false and vulgar :

Alive, in equal flames of love they burn'd,
And now together are to ashes turn'd.

The verses to Charles, on his Return, were doubtless intended to counterbalance the panegyric on Cromwell. If it has been thought inferior to that with which it is naturally compared, the cause of its deficiency has been already remarked.

The remaining pieces it is not necessary to examine singly. They must be supposed to have faults and beauties of the same kind with the rest. The Sacred Poems, however, deserve particular regard ; they were the work of Waller's declining life, of those hours in which he looked upon the fame and the folly of the time past with the sentiments which his great predecessor Petrarch

trarch bequeathed to posterity, upon his review of that love and poetry which have given him immortality.

That natural jealousy which makes every man unwilling to allow much excellence in another, always produces a disposition to believe that the mind grows old with the body; and that he whom we are now forced to confess superior, is hastening daily to a level with ourselves. By delighting to think this of the living, we learn to think it of the dead; and Fenton, with all his kindness for Waller, has the luck to mark the exact time when his genius passed the zenith, which he places at his fifty-fifth year. This is to allot the mind but a small portion. Intellectual decay is doubtless not uncommon; but it seems not to be universal. Newton was in his eighty-fifth year improving his chronology, a few days before his death; and Waller appears not, in my opinion, to have lost at eighty-two any part of his poetical power.

His Sacred Poems do not please like some of his other works; but before the fatal fifty-five, had he written on the same subjects, his success would hardly have been better.

It

It has been the frequent lamentation of good men, that verse has been too little applied to the purposes of worship, and many attempts have been made to animate devotion by pious poetry; that they have very seldom attained their end is sufficiently known, and it may not be improper to enquire why they have miscarried.

Let no pious ear be offended if I advance, in opposition to many authorities, that poetical devotion cannot often please. The doctrines of religion may indeed be defended in a didactic poem; and he who has the happy power of arguing in verse, will not lose it because his subject is sacred. A poet may describe the beauty and the grandeur of Nature, the flowers of the Spring, and the harvests of Autumn, the vicissitudes of the Tide, and the revolutions of the Sky, and praise the Maker for his works in lines, which no reader shall lay aside. The subject of the disputation is not piety, but the motives to piety; that of the description is not God, but the works of God.

Contemplative piety, or the intercourse between God and the human soul, cannot be poetical. Man admitted to implore the mercy

of his Creator, and plead the merits of his Redeemer, is already in a higher state than poetry can confer.

The essence of poetry is invention; such invention as, by producing something unexpected, surprises and delights. The topics of devotion are few, and being few are universally known; but, few as there are, they can be made no more; they can receive no grace from novelty of sentiment, and very little from novelty of expression.

Poetry pleases by exhibiting an idea more grateful to the mind than things themselves afford. This effect proceeds from the display of those parts of nature which attract, and the concealment of those which repel the imagination: but religion must be shewn as it is; suppression and addition equally corrupt it, and such as it is, it is known already.

From poetry the reader justly expects, and from good poetry always obtains, the enlargement of his comprehension and elevation of his fancy; but this is rarely to be hoped by Christians from metrical devotion. Whatever is great, desirable, or tremendous, is comprised in the name of the Supreme Being. Omnipotence

tence cannot be exalted; Infinity cannot be amplified; Perfection cannot be improved.

The employments of pious meditation are Faith, Thanksgiving, Repentance, and Supplication. Faith, invariably uniform, cannot be invested by fancy with decorations. Thanksgiving, the most joyful of all holy effusions, yet addressed to a Being without passions, is confined to a few modes, and is to be felt rather than expressed. Repentance trembling in the presence of the judge, is not at leisure for cadences and epithets. Supplication of man to man may diffuse itself through many topicks of persuasion; but supplication to God can only cry for mercy.

Of sentiments purely religious, it will be found that the most simple expression is the most sublime. Poetry loses its lustre and its power, because it is applied to the decoration of something more excellent than itself. All that pious verse can do is to help the memory, and delight the ear, and for these purposes it may be very useful; but it supplies nothing to the mind. The ideas of Christian Theology are too simple for eloquence, too sacred for fiction, and too majestick for ornament; to

recommmend them by tropes and figures, is to magnify by a concave mirror the sidereal hemisphere.

As much of Waller's reputation was owing to the softness and smoothness of his Numbers; it is proper to consider those minute particulars to which a versifier must attend.

He certainly very much excelled in smoothness most of the writers who were living when his poetry commenced. The Poets of Elizabeth had attained an art of modulation, which was afterwards neglected or forgotten. Fairfax was acknowledged by him as his model; and he might have studied with advantage the poem of Davies *, which, though merely philosophical, yet seldom leaves the ear ungratified.

But he was rather smooth than strong; of *the full resounding line*, which Pope attributes to Dryden, he has given very few examples. The critical decision has given the praise of strength to Denham, and of sweetness to Waller.

* Sir John Davies, entitled "Nosce teipsum. This Oracle expounded in two Elegies; I. Of Humane Knowledge, II. Of the Soule of Man and the Immortalitie thereof. 1599." E.

His excellence of versification has some abatements. He uses the expletive *do* very frequently; and though he lived to see it almost universally ejected, was not more careful to avoid it in his last compositions than in his first. Praise had given him confidence; and finding the world satisfied, he satisfied himself.

His rhymes are sometimes weak words: *so* is found to make the rhyme twice in ten lines, and occurs often as a rhyme through his book.

His double rhymes, in heroick verse, have been censured by Mrs. Phillips, who was his rival in the translation of Corneille's Pompey; and more faults might be found, were not the enquiry below attention.

He sometimes uses the obsolete termination of verbs, as *waxeth*, *affecteth*; and sometimes retains the final syllable of the preterite, as *amazed*, *supposed*, of which I know not whether it is not to the detriment of our language that we have totally rejected them.

Of triplets he is sparing; but he did not wholly forbear them: of an Alexandrine he has given no example.

The general character of his poetry is elegance and gaiety. He is never pathetick, and

very rarely sublime. He seems neither to have had a mind much elevated by nature, nor amplified by learning. His thoughts are such as a liberal conversation and large acquaintance with life would easily supply. They had however then, perhaps, that grace of novelty, which they are now often supposed to want by those who, having already found them in later books, do not know or enquire who produced them first. This treatment is unjust. Let not the original author lose by his imitators.

Praise, however, should be due before it is given. The author of Waller's Life ascribes to him the first practice, of what Erythræus and some late critics call *Alliteration*, of using in the same verse many words beginning with the same letter. But this knack, whatever be its value, was so frequent among early writers, that Gascoigne, a writer of the sixteenth century, warns the young poet against affecting it; Shakspeare, in the *Midsommer Night's Dream*, is supposed to ridicule it; and in another play the sonnet of Holofernes fully displays it.

He borrows too many of his sentiments and illustrations from the old Mythology, for
which

which it is vain to plead the example of ancient poets: the deities, which they introduced so frequently, were considered as realities, so far as to be received by the imagination, whatever sober reason might even then determine. But of these images time has tarnished the splendor. A fiction, not only detected but despised, can never afford a solid basis to any position, though sometimes it may furnish a transient allusion, or slight illustration. No modern monarch can be much exalted by hearing that, as Hercules had had his *club*, he has his *navy*.

But of the praise of Waller, though much may be taken away, much will remain; for it cannot be denied that he added something to our elegance of diction, and something to our propriety of thought; and to him may be applied what Tasso said, with equal spirit and justice of himself and Guarini, when, having perused the *Pastor Fido*, he cried out, "If he had not read *Aminta*, he had not excelled it."

A S Waller professed himself to have learned the art of versification from Fairfax, it has been thought proper to subjoin a specimen of his work, which, after Mr. Hoole's translation, will perhaps not be soon reprinted. By knowing the state in which Waller found our poetry, the reader may judge how much he improved it.

1.

Erminia's speed (this while) his mistress bore
Through forrests thicke among the shadie treene,
Her feeble hand the bridle raines forlore;
Halfe in a swoone she was for feare I weene;
But her flit courser spared nere the more,
'To beare her through the desert woods unseene
Of her strong foes, that chas'd her through the
And still pursu'd, but still pursu'd in vaine. [plaine,

2.

Like as the wearie bounds at last retire,
Windleffe, displeased, from the fruitlesse chace,
When the slie beast Tapisht in bush and brire,
No art nor paines can rowse out of his place:
The Christian knights so full of shame and ire
Returned backe, with faint and wearie pace!
Yet still the fearfull Dame fled, swift as winde,
Nor euer staid, nor euer lookt behinde.

3. Through

3.

Through thicke and thinne, all night, all day, she
 Withouten comfort, companie, or guide, {driued,
 Her plaints and teares with euery thought reuiued,
 She heard and saw her greefes, but nought beside.
 But when the sunne his burning chariot diued
 In Thetis waue, and wearie teame vntide,
 On Iordans sandie banks her course she staid,
 At last, there downe she light, and downe she laid.

4.

Her teares, her drinke ; her food, her sorrowings,
 This was her diet that vnhappy night :
 But sleepe (that sweet repose and quiet brings)
 To ease the greefes of discontented wight,
 Spread foorth his tender, soft, and nimble wings,
 In his dull armes foulding the virgin bright ;
 And lone, his mother, and the graces kept
 Strong watch and warde, while this faire Ladie slept.

5.

The birds awakte her with their morning song,
 Their warbling musicke pearst her tender eare,
 The murmuring brookes and whistling windes among
 The ratling boughes, and leaues, their parts did beare;
 Her eyes vnclos'd beheld the groues along [weare ;
 Of swaines and shepherd groomes, that dwellings
 And that sweet noise, birds, winds, and waters sent,
 Prouokte again the virgin to lament.

6. Her

6.

Her plaints were interrupted with a sound,
 That seem'd from thickest bushes to proceed,
 Some iolly shepherd sung a lustie round,
 And to his voice had tun'd his oaten reed;
 Thither she went, an old man there she found,
 (At whose right hand his little flock did feed)
 Sat making baskets, his three sonnes among,
 That learn'd their fathers art, and learn'd his song.

7.

Beholding one in shining armes appeare
 The feeble man and his were sore dismayd;
 But sweet Erminia comforted their feare,
 Her ventall vp, her visage open laid,
 You happie folke, of heau'n beloued deare,
 Work on (quoth she) upon your harmlesse traid,
 These dreadfull armes I beare no warfare bring
 To your sweet toile, nor those sweet tunes you sing.

8.

But father, since this land, these townes and towres,
 Destroyed are with sword with fire and spoile,
 How may it be unhurt, that you and yours
 In safetie thus, applie your harmlesse toile?
 My sonne (quoth he) this pore estate of ours
 Is euer safe from storm of warlike broile;
 This wilderness doth vs in safetie keepe,
 No thundring drum, notrumpet breakes our sleepe.

9. Haply

9.

Haply iust heau'ns defence and shield of right,
Doth loue the innocence of simple swains,
The thunderbolts on highest mountains light,
And feld or neuer strike the lower plaines :
So kings haue cause to feare *Bellonaes* might,
Not they whose sweat and toile their dinner gaines,
Nor ever greedie soldier was entised
By pouertie, neglected and despised.

10.

O pouertie, chiefe of the heau'nly brood,
Dearer to me than wealth or kingly crowne !
No wish for honour, thirst of others good,
Can moue my hart, contented with mine owne :
We quench our thirst with water of this flood,
Nor fear we poison should therein be throwne :
These little flocks of sheepe and tender goates
Giue milke for food, and wool to make us coates.

11.

We little wish, we need but little wealth,
From cold and hunger vs to cloath and feed ;
These are my sonnes, their care preferues from stealth
Their fathers flocks, nor seruants moe I need :
Amid these groues I walke oft for my health,
And to the fishes, birds, and beastes giue heed,
How they are fed, in forrest, spring and lake,
And their contentment for ensample take.

12.

Time was (for each one hath his doting time,
 These siluer locks were golden tresses than)
 That countrie life I hated as a crime,
 And from the forests sweet contentment ran,
 To Memphis stately pallace would I clime,
 And there became the mightie Caliphes man,
 And though I but a simple gardner weare,
 Yet could I marke abuses, see and heare.

13.

Entised on with hope of future gaine,
 I suffred long what did my soule displease;
 But when my youth was spent, my hope was vaine,
 I felt my native strength at last decrease;
 I gan my losse of lustie yeeres complaine,
 And wisht I had enjoy'd the countries peace;
 I bod the court farewell, and with content
 My later age here have I quiet spent.

14.

While thus he spake, Erminia husht and still
 His wise discourses heard, with great attention,
 His speeches graue those idle fancies kill,
 Which in her troubled soule bred such dissention;
 After much thought reformed was her will,
 Within those woods to dwell was her intention,
 Till fortune should occasion new afford,
 To turne her home to her desired Lord.

15. She

15.

She said therefore, O shepherd fortunate!
That troubles some didst whilom feele and proue,
Yet liuest now in this contented state,
Let my mishap thy thoughts to pitie moue,
To entertaine me as a willing mate
In shepherds life, which I admire and loue;
Within these pleasant groues perchance my hart,
Of her discomforts, may vnload some part.

16.

If gold or wealth of most esteemed deare,
If iewels rich, thou diddest hold in prise,
Such store thereof, such plentie haue I seen,
As to a greedie minde might well suffice:
With that downe trickled many a siluer teare,
Two christall streames fell from her watrie eies;
Part of her sad misfortunes than she told,
And wept, and with her wept that shepherd old.

17.

With speeches kinde, he gan the virgin deare
Towards his cottage gently home to guide;
His aged wife there made her homely cheare,
Yet welcomde her, and plapt her by her side.
The Princeesse dond a poore pastoraes geare,
A kerchiefe couise vpon her head she tide;
But yet her gestures and her lookes (I gesse)
Were such, as ill beseem'd a shepherdesse.

18. Not

18.

Not those rude garments could obscure, and hide,
The heau'nly beautie of her angels face,
Nor was her princely offspring damnifide,
Or ought disparag'de, by those labours bare;
Her little flocks to pasture would she guide,
And milke her goates. and in their folds them place,
Both cheefe and butter could she make, and frame
Her selfe to please the shepherd and his dame.

P O M F R E T.

OF Mr. JOHN POMFRET nothing is known but from a slight and confused account prefixed to his poems by a nameless friend; who relates, that he was the son of the Rev. Mr. Pomfret, rector of Luton in Bedfordshire; that he was bred at Cambridge*; entered into orders, and was rector of Malden in Bedfordshire, and might have risen in the Church; but that when he applied to Dr. Compton, bishop of London, for institution to a living of considerable value, to which he had been presented,

* He was of Queen's College there, and, by the University register, appears, to have taken his Bachelor's degree in 1684, and his Master's in 1693. H.

he

he found a troublesome obstruction raised by a malicious interpretation of some passage in his *Choice*; from which it was inferred, that he considered happiness as more likely to be found in the company of a mistress than of a wife.

This reproach was easily obliterated: for it had happened to Pomfret as to all other men who plan schemes of life; he had departed from his purpose, and was then married.

The malice of his enemies had however a very fatal consequence: the delay constrained his attendance in London, where he caught the small-pox, and died in 1703, in the thirty-sixth year of his age.

He published his poems in 1699; and has been always the favourite of that class of readers, who, without vanity or criticism, seek only their own amusement.

His *Choice* exhibits a system of life adapted to common notions, and equal to common expectations; such a state as affords plenty and tranquillity, without exclusion of intellectual pleasures. Perhaps no composition in our language has been oftener perused than Pomfret's *Choice*.

In his other poems there is an easy volubility; the pleasure of smooth metre is afforded to the ear, and the mind is not oppressed with ponderous or entangled with intricate sentiment. He pleases many, and he who pleases many must have some species of merit

D O R S E T.

OF the Earl of Dorset the character has been drawn so largely and so elegantly by Prior, to whom he was familiarly known, that nothing can be added by a casual hand; and, as its author is so generally read, it would be useless officiousness to transcribe it.

CHARLES SACKVILLE was born January 24, 1637. Having been educated under a private tutor, he travelled into Italy, and returned a little before the Restoration. He was chosen into the first parliament that was called, for East Grinstead in Suffex, and soon became a favourite of Charles the Second; but undertook no publick employment, being too eager of the riotous and licentious pleasures
which

which young men of high rank, who aspired to be thought wits, at that time imagined themselves intitled to indulge.

One of these frolicks has, by the industry of Wood, come down to posterity. Sackville, who was then Lord Buckhurst, with Sir Charles Sedley and Sir Thomas Ogle, got drunk at the Cock in Bow-street by Covent-garden, and, going into the balcony, exposed themselves to the populace in very indecent postures. At last, as they grew warmer, Sedley stood forth naked, and harangued the populace in such profane language, that the publick indignation was awakened; the crowd attempted to force the door, and, being repulsed, drove in the performers with stones, and broke the windows of the house.

For this misdemeanor they were indicted, and Sedley was fined five hundred pounds: what was the sentence of the others is not known. Sedley employed Killigrew and another to procure a remission from the king; but (mark the friendship of the dissolute!) they begged the fine for themselves, and exacted it to the last groat.

In 1665, Lord Buckhurst attended the Duke of York as a volunteer in the Dutch war; and was in the battle of June 3, when eighteen great Dutch ships were taken, fourteen others were destroyed, and Opdam the admiral, who engaged the Duke, was blown up beside him, with all his crew.

On the day before the battle, he is said to have composed the celebrated song, *To all you Ladies now at land*, with equal tranquillity of mind and promptitude of wit. Seldom any splendid story is wholly true. I have heard from the late earl of Orrery, who was likely to have good hereditary intelligence, that Lord Buckhurst had been a week employed upon it, and only retouched or finished it on the memorable evening. But even this, whatever it may subtract from his facility, leaves him his courage.

He was soon after made a gentleman of the bedchamber, and sent on short embassies to France.

In 1674, the estate of his uncle James Cranfield, Earl of Middlesex, came to him by its owner's death, and the title was conferred on him the year after. In 1677, he became, by

the death of his father, Earl of Dorset, and inherited the estate of his family.

In 1684, having buried his first wife, of the family of Bagot, who left him no child, he married a daughter of the Earl of Northampton, celebrated both for beauty and understanding.

He received some favourable notice from King James; but soon found it necessary to oppose the violence of his innovations, and with some other Lords appeared in Westminster-hall to countenance the bishops at their trial.

As enormities grew every day less supportable, he found it necessary to concur in the Revolution. He was one of those Lords who sat every day in council to preserve the public peace, after the king's departure; and, what is not the most illustrious action of his life, was employed to conduct the princess Anne to Nottingham with a guard, such as might alarm the populace, as they passed, with false apprehensions of her danger. Whatever end may be designed, there is always something despicable in a trick.

He became, as may be easily supposed, a favourite of King William, who, the day after his accession, made him lord chamberlain of the household, and gave him afterwards the garter. He happened to be among those that were tossed with the King in an open boat sixteen hours, in very rough and cold weather, on the coast of Holland. His health afterwards declined; and on January 19, 1705-6, he died at Bath.

He was a man whose elegance and judgment were universally confessed, and whose bounty to the learned and witty was generally known. To the indulgent affection of the publick, Lord Rochester bore ample testimony in this remark: *I know not how it is, but Lord Buckhurst may do what he will, yet is never in the wrong.*

If such a man attempted poetry, we cannot wonder that his works were praised. Dryden, whom, if Prior tells truth, he distinguished by his beneficence, and who lavished his blandishments on those who are not known to have so well deserved them, undertaking to produce authors of our own country superior to those of antiquity, says, *I would instance your Lordship*
in

in satire, and Shakspeare in tragedy. Would it be imagined that, of this rival to antiquity, all the satires were little personal invectives, and that his longest composition was a song of eleven stanzas?

The blame, however, of this exaggerated praise falls on the encomiast, not upon the author; whose performances are, what they pretend to be, the effusions of a man of wit; gay, vigorous, and airy. His verses to Howard shew great fertility of mind, and his *Dorinda* has been imitated by Pope

S T E P N E Y.

GEORGE STEPNEY, descended from the Stepneys of Pendigraſt in Pembrokeſhire, was born at Weſtminſter in 1663. Of his father's condition or fortune we have no account. Having received the firſt part of his education at Weſtminſter, where he paſſed fix years in the College, he went at nineteen to Cambridge*, where he continued a friendſhip begun at ſchool with Mr. Montague, afterwards Earl of Halifax. They came to London together, and are ſaid to have been invited into publick life by the Duke of Dorſet.

* He was entered of Trinity College, and took his Maſter's degree in 1689. H.

His qualifications recommended him to many foreign employments, so that his time seems to have been spent in negotiations. In 1692 he was sent envoy to the Elector of Brandenburg; in 1693 to the Imperial Court; in 1694 to the Elector of Saxony; in 1696 to the Electors of Mentz and Cologne, and the Congress at Francfort; in 1698 a second time to Brandenburg; in 1699 to the King of Poland; in 1701 again to the Emperor; and in 1706 to the States General. In 1697 he was made one of the commissioners of trade. His life was busy, and not long. He died in 1707; and is buried in Westminster Abbey, with this epitaph, which *Jacob* transcribed:

H. S. E.

GEORGIUS STEPNEIUS, Armiger,

Vir

Ob Ingenii acumen,

Literarum Scientiam,

Morum Suavitatem,

Rerum Usus,

Virorum Amplissimorum Consuetudinem

Linguae, Stylli, ac Vitae Elegantiam,

Præclara Officia cum Britanniae tum Europæ
præstita,

Sua

Sua ætate multum celebratus,
 Apud posteros semper celebrandus;
 Plurimas Legationes obiit
 Ea Fide, Diligentia, ac Felicitate,
 Ut Augustissimorum Principum
 Gulielmi & Annæ
 Spem in illo repositam
 Nunquam fefellerit,
 Haud raro superaverit.
 Post longum honorum Cursum
 Brevi Temporis Spatio confectum,
 Cum Naturæ parum, Famæ satis vixerat,
 Animam ad altiora aspirantem placide efflavit.

On the Left Hand,

G. S.

Ex Equestri Familia Stepneiorum,
 De Pendegrast, in Comitatu
 Pembrochienti oriundus,
 Westmonasterii natus est, A. D. 1663.
 Electus in Collegium
 Sancti Petri Westmonast. A. 1676.
 Sancti Trinitatis Cantab. 1682.
 Consiliariorum quibus Commercii
 Cura commissa est 1697.
 Chelseiæ mortuus, & comitante
 Magna Procerum
 Frequentia, huc elatus, 1707.

It is reported that the juvenile compositions of Stepney *made grey authors blush*. I know not whether his poems will appear such wonders to the present age. One cannot always easily find the reason for which the world has sometimes conspired to squander praise. It is not very unlikely that he wrote very early as well as he ever wrote; and the performances of youth have many favourers, because the authors yet lay no claim to publick honours, and are therefore not considered as rivals by the distributors of fame

He apparently professed himself a poet, and added his name to those of the other wits in the version of Juvenal; but he is a very licentious translator, and does not recompense his neglect of the author by beauties of his own. In his original poems, now and then, a happy line may perhaps be found, and now and then a short composition may give pleasure. But there is, in the whole, little either of the grace of wit, or the vigour of nature.

J. P H I L I P S.

JOHN PHILIPS was born on the 30th of December, 1676, at Bampton in Oxfordshire; of which place his father Dr. Stephen Philips, archdeacon of Salop, was minister. The first part of his education was domestick, after which he was sent to Winchester, where, as we are told by Dr. Sewel, his biographer, he was soon distinguished by the superiority of his exercises; and, what is less easily to be credited, so much endeared himself to his schoolfellows by his civility and good-nature, that they, without murmur or ill-will, saw him indulged by the master with particular immunities. It is related, that when he was at school, he seldom mingled in play with the other boys, but retired to his chamber; where his sovereign pleasure was to sit,

fit, hour after hour, while his hair was combed by somebody, whose service he found means to procure*.

At school he became acquainted with the poets ancient and moden, and fixed his attention particularly on Milton.

In 1694 he entered himself at Christ-church; a college at that time in the highest reputation, by the transmission of Busby's scholars to the care first of *Fell*, and afterwards of *Aldrich*. Here he was distinguished as a genius eminent among the eminent, and for friendship particularly intimate with Mr. Smith, the author

* Isaac Vossius relates that he also delighted in having his hair combed when he could have it done by barbers or other persons skilled in the rules of prosody. Of the passage that contains this ridiculous fancy, the following is a translation: "Many people take delight in the rubbing of their limbs, and the combing of their hair, but these exercises would delight much more, if the servants at the baths, and of the barbers, were so skilful in this art, that they could express any measures with their fingers. I remember that more than once I have fallen into the hands of men of this sort, who could imitate any measure of songs in combing the hair, so as sometimes to express very intelligibly Iambics, Trochees, Dactyls, &c. from whence there arose to me no small delight." See his Treatise *De Poematum cantu & viribus Rythmi*, Oxon. 1673, p. 62. H.

of *Phædra and Hippolytus*. The profession which he intended to follow was that of Physick; and he took much delight in natural history, of which botany was his favourite part.

His reputation was confined to his friends and to the university; till about 1703 he extended it to a wider circle by the *Splendid Shilling*, which struck the publick attention with a mode of writing new and unexpected.

This performance raised him so high, that when Europe resounded with the victory of Blenheim, he was, probably with an occult opposition to Addison, employed to deliver the acclamation of the Tories. It is said that he would willingly have declined the task, but that his friends urged it upon him. It appears that he wrote this poem at the house of Mr. St. John.

Blenheim was published in 1705. The next year produced his greatest work, the poem upon *Cider*, in two books; which was received with loud praises, and continued long to be read, as an imitation of Virgil's *Georgic*, which needed not shun the presence of the original.

He

He then grew probably more confident of his own abilities, and began to meditate a poem on the *Last day*; a subject on which no mind can hope to equal expectation.

This work he did not live to finish; his diseases, a slow consumption and an asthma, put a stop to his studies; and on Feb. 15, 1708, at the beginning of his thirty-third year, put an end to his life. He was buried in the cathedral of Hereford; and Sir *Simon Harcourt*, afterwards Lord Chancellor, gave him a monument in Westminster Abbey. The inscription at Westminster was written, as I have heard, by Dr. *Atterbury*, though commonly given to Dr. *Freind*.

His Epitaph at Hereford:

J O H A N N E S P H I L I P S

Obit 15 die Feb. Anno { Dom. 1708.
Ætat. suæ 32.

Cujus

Offa si requiras, hanc Urnam inspice;
Si ingenium nescias, ipsius Opera consule;

Si Tumulum desideras,

Templum adi *Westmonasteriense*:

Qualis quantusque Vir fuerit,

Dicat elegans illa & preclara,

Quæ cenotaphium ibi decorat,

Inscriptio.

Quàm

Quàm interim erga Cognatos pius & officiosus,
Testetur hoc saxum

A MARIA PHILIPS Matre ipsius pientissimâ,
Dilecti Filii Memoriae non sine Lacrymis dicatum,

His Epitaph at Westminster:

Herefordiæ conduntur Ossa,

Hoc in Delubro statuitur Imago,

Britanniam omnem pervagatur Fama

J O H A N N I S P H I L I P S:

Qui Viris bonis doctisque juxta charus,

Immortale suum Ingenium,

Eruditione multiplici excultum,

Miro animi candore,

Eximiâ morum simplicitate,

Honestavit.

Litterarum Amœniorum sitim,

Quam Wintoniæ Puer sentire cœperat,

Inter Ædis Christi Alumnos jugiter explevit,

In illo Musarum Domicilio

Præclaris Æmulorum studiis excitatus,

Optimis scribendi Magistris semper intentus,

Carmina sermone Patrio composuit

A Græcis Latinisque fontibus feliciter deducta,

Atticis Romanisque auribus omnino digna,

Versuum quippe Harmoniam

Rythmo didicerat.

Antiquo illo, libero multiformi

Ad res ipsas apto prorsus, & attemperato,

Non

Non numeris in eundem ferè orbem redeuntibus,
 Non Clausularum similiter cadentium sono
 Metiri :

Uni in hoc laudis genere Miltono secundus,
 Primoque pœne Par.

Res seu Tenuës, seu Grandes, seu Mediocres
 Ornandas sumserat,

Nusquam, non quod decuit,

Et videt, & assecutus est,

Egregius, quocunque Stylum verteret,

Fandi author, & Modorum artifex.

Fas sit Huic,

Auso licèt à tuâ Metrorum Lege discedere

O Pœsis Anglicanæ Pater, atque Conditor, Chaucere,

Alterum tibi latus claudere,

Vatum certe Cineres, tuos undique stipantium

Non dedecebit Chorum.

SIMON HARCOURT Miles,

Viri benè de se, de Litteris meriti

Quoad viveret Fautor,

Post Obitum piè memor,

Hoc illi Saxum poni voluit.

J. PHILIPS, STEPHANI, S. T. P. Archidiaconi

Salop, Filius, natus est Bamptoniæ

in agro Oxon. Dec. 30, 1676.

Obiit Hêrefordiæ, Feb. 15, 1708.

Philips has been always praised, without
 contradiction, as a man modest, blameless, and

pious; who bore narrowness of fortune without discontent, and tedious and painful maladies without impatience; beloved by those that knew him, but not ambitious to be known. He was probably not formed for a wide circle. His conversation is commended for its innocent gaiety, which seems to have flowed only among his intimates, for I have been told, that he was in company silent and barren, and employed only upon the pleasures of his pipe. His addiction to tobacco is mentioned by one of his biographers, who remarks that in all his writings, except *Benhim*, he has found an opportunity of celebrating the fragrant fume. In common life he was probably one of those who please by not offending, and whose person was loved because his writings were admired. He died honoured and lamented, before any part of his reputation had withered, and before his patron St. John had disgraced him.

His works are few. The *Splendid Shilling* has the uncommon merit of an original design, unless it may be thought precluded by the ancient *Cents*. To degrade the sounding words and stately construction of Milton, by an application to the lowest and most trivial things,

things, gratifies the mind with a momentary triumph over that grandeur which hitherto held its captives in admiration; the words and things are presented with a new appearance, and novelty is always grateful where it gives no pain.

But the merit of such performances begins and ends with the first author. He that should again adapt Milton's phrase to the gross incidents of common life, and even adapt it with more art, which would not be difficult, must yet expect but a small part of the praise which Philips has obtained; he can only hope to be considered as the repeater of a jest.

"The parody on Milton," says Gildon, "is the only tolerable production of its author." This is a censure too dogmatical and violent. The poem of *Blenheim* was never denied to be tolerable, even by those who do not allow its supreme excellence. It is indeed the poem of a scholar, *a'l inexpert of war*; of a man who writes books from books, and studies the world in a college. He seems to have formed his ideas of the field of *Blenheim* from the battles of the heroic ages, or the tales of chivalry, with very little comprehension of

the qualities necessary to the composition of a modern hero, which Addison has displayed with so much propriety. He makes *Marlbrough* behold at a distance the slaughter made by *Tallard*, then haste to encounter and restrain him, and mow his way through ranks made headless by his sword.

He imitates Milton's numbers indeed, but imitates them very injudiciously. Deformity is easily copied; and whatever there is in Milton which the reader wishes away, all that is obsolete, peculiar, or licentious, is accumulated with great care by Philips. Milton's verse was harmonious, in proportion to the general state of our metre in Milton's age; and, if he had written after the improvements made by Dryden, it is reasonable to believe that he would have admitted a more pleasing modulation of numbers into his work; but Philips sits down with a resolution to make no more musick than he found; to want all that his master wanted, though he is very far from having what his master had. Those asperities, therefore, that are venerable in the *Paradise Lost*, are contemptible in the *Blenheim*.

There

There is a Latin ode written to his patron St. John, in return for a present of wine and tobacco, which cannot be passed without notice. It is gay and elegant, and exhibits several artful accommodations of classick expressions to new purposes. It seems better turned than the odes of *Hannes* *.

To the poem on *Cider*, written in imitation of the *Georgicks*, may be given this peculiar praise, that it is grounded in truth; that the precepts which it contains are exact and just; and that it is therefore, at once, a book of entertainment and of science. This I was told by Miller, the great gardener and botanist, whose expression was, that *there were many books written on the same subject in prose, which do not contain so much truth as that poem.*

* This ode I am willing to mention, because there seems to be an error in all the printed copies, which is, I find, retained in the last. They all read;

Quam Gratiarum cura decentium
O! O! labellis cui Venus infidet.

The author probably wrote,

Quam Gratiarum cura decentium
Ornat; labellis cui Venus infidet. Dr. J.

In the disposition of his matter, so as to intersperse precepts relating to the culture of trees, with sentiments more generally alluring, and in easy and graceful transitions from one subject to another, he has very diligently imitated his master; but he unhappily pleased himself with blank verse, and supposed that the numbers of Milton, which impress the mind with veneration, combined as they are with subjects of inconceivable grandeur, could be sustained by images which at most can rise only to elegance. Contending angels may shake the regions of heaven in blank verse; but the flow of equal measures, and the embellishment of rhyme, must recommend to our attention the art of engrafting, and decide the merit of the *redstreak* and *pearmain*.

What study could confer, Philips had obtained; but natural deficiency cannot be supplied. He seems not born to greatness and elevation. He is never lofty, nor does he often surprise with unexpected excellence; but perhaps to his last poem may be applied what Tully said of the work of Lucretius, that *it is written with much art, though with few blazes of genius*.

The following fragment, written by Edmund Smith, upon the works of Philips, has been transcribed from the Bodleian manuscripts.

“ A prefatory Discourse to the poem on Mr. Philips, with a character of his writings. . .

“ It is altogether as equitable some account should be given of those who have distinguished themselves by their writings, as of those who are renowned for great actions. It is but reasonable they, who contribute so much to the immortality of others, should have some share in it themselves; and since their genius only is discovered by their works, it is just that their virtues should be recorded by their friends. For no modest men (as the person I write of was in perfection) will write their own panegyrics; and it is very hard that they should go without reputation, only because they the more deserve it. The end of writing Lives is for the imitation of the readers. It will be in the power of very few to imitate the duke of Marlborough; we must be content with admiring his great qualities and actions, without hopes of following them. The private and

social virtues are more easily transcribed. The Life of Cowley is more instructive, as well as more fine, than any we have in our language. And it is to be wished, since Mr. Philips had so many of the good qualities of that poet, that I had some of the abilities of his historian.

The Grecian philosophers have had their Lives written, their morals commended, and their sayings recorded. Mr. Philips had all the virtues to which most of them only pretended, and all their integrity without any of their affectation.

The French are very just to eminent men in this point; not a learned man nor a poet can die, but all Europe must be acquainted with his accomplishments. They give praise and expect it in their turns: they commend their Patru's and Molieres as well as their Condés and Turennes; their Pellifons and Racines have their elogies, as well as the prince whom they celebrate; and their poems, their mercuries, and orations, nay their very gazettes, are filled with the praises of the learned.

I am satisfied, had they a Philips among them, and known how to value him; had they

one of his learning, his temper, but above all of that particular turn of humour, that altogether new genius, he had been an example to their poets, and a subject of their panegyricks, and perhaps set in competition with the ancients, to whom only he ought to submit.

I shall therefore endeavour to do justice to his memory, since nobody else undertakes it. And indeed I can assign no cause why so many of his acquaintance (that are as willing and more able than myself to give an account of him) should forbear to celebrate the memory of one so dear to them, but only that they look upon it as a work entirely belonging to me.

I shall content myself with giving only a character of the person and his writings, without meddling with the transactions of his life, which was altogether private: I shall only make this known observation of his family, that there was scarce so many extraordinary men in any one. I have been acquainted with five of his brothers (of which three are still living), all men of fine parts, yet all of a very unlike temper and genius. So that their fruit-
ful

ful mother, like the mother of the gods, seems to have produced a numerous offspring, all of different though uncommon faculties. Of the living, neither their modesty nor the humour of the present age permits me to speak: of the dead, I may say something.

One of them had made the greatest progress in the study of the law of nature and nations of any one I know. He had perfectly mastered, and even improved, the notions of Grotius, and the more refined ones of Puffendorff. He could refute Hobbes, with as much solidity as some of greater name, and expose him with as much wit as Echard. That noble study, which requires the greatest reach of reason and nicety of distinction, was not at all difficult to him. 'Twas a national loss to be deprived of one who understood a science so necessary, and yet so unknown in England. I shall add only, he had the same honesty and sincerity as the person I write of, but more heat: the former was more inclined to argue, the latter to divert: one employed his reason more; the other his imagination: the former had been well qualified for those posts, which the modesty of the latter made him refuse. His other dead
brother

brother would have been an ornament to the college of which he was a member. He had a genius either for poetry or oratory ; and, though very young, composed several very agreeable pieces. In all probability he would have wrote as finely, as his brother did nobly. He might have been the Waller, as the other was the Milton of his time. The one might celebrate Marlborough, the other his beautiful offspring. This had not been so fit to describe the actions of heroes as the virtues of private men. In a word, he had been fitter for my place, and while his brother was writing upon the greatest men that any age ever produced, in a style equal to them, he might have served as a panegyrist on him.

This is all I think necessary to say of his family. I shall proceed to himself and his writings ; which I shall first treat of, because I know they are censured by some out of envy, and more out of ignorance.

The *Splendid Shilling*, which is far the least considerable, has the more general reputation, and perhaps hinders the character of the rest. The style agreed so well with the burlesque, that the ignorant thought it could become
nothing

nothing else. Every body is pleased with that work. But to judge rightly of the other, requires a perfect mastery of poetry and criticism, a just contempt of the little turns and witticisms now in vogue, and, above all, a perfect understanding of poetical diction and description.

All that have any taste of poetry will agree, that the great burlesque is much to be preferred to the low. It is much easier to make a great thing appear little, than a little one great: Cotton and others of a very low genius have done the former; but Philips, Garth, and Boileau, only the latter.

A picture in miniature is every painter's talent; but a piece for a cupola, where all the figures are enlarged, yet proportioned to the eye, requires a master's hand.

It must still be more acceptable than the low burlesque, because the images of the latter are mean and filthy, and the language itself entirely unknown to all men of good breeding. The style of Billingsgate would not make a very agreeable figure at St. James's. A gentleman would take but little pleasure in language, which he would think it hard to be accosted in,

or

or in reading words which he could not pronounce without blushing. The lofty burlesque is the more to be admired, because, to write it, the author must be master of two of the most different talents in nature. A talent to find out and expose what is ridiculous, is very different from that which is to raise and elevate. We must read Virgil and Milton for the one, and Horace and Hudibras for the other. We know that the authors of excellent comedies have often failed in the grave style, and the tragedian as often in comedy. Admiration and Laughter are of such opposite natures, that they are seldom created by the same person. The man of mirth is always observing the follies and weaknesses; the serious writer, the virtues or crimes of mankind; one is pleased with contemplating a beau, the other a hero: Even from the same object they would draw different ideas: Achilles would appear in very different lights to Therfites and Alexander. The one would admire the courage and greatness of his soul; the other, would ridicule the vanity and rashness of his temper. As the satyrift says to Hanibal:

— I curre per Alpes

Ut pueris placeas, & declamatio fias.

The

The contrariety of style to the subject pleases the more strongly, because it is more surprising; the expectation of the reader is pleasantly deceived, who expects an humble style from the subject, or a great subject from the style. It pleases the more universally, because it is agreeable to the taste both of the grave and the merry; but more particularly so to those who have a relish of the best writers, and the noblest sort of poetry. I shall produce only one passage out of this poet, which is the misfortune of his Galligaskins:

My Galligaskins, which have long withstood
The winter's fury and encroaching frosts,
By time subdued (what will not time subdue!)

This is admirably pathetic, and shews very well the vicissitudes of sublunary things. The rest goes on to a prodigious height; and a man in Greenland could hardly have made a more pathetick and terrible complaint. Is it not surprising that the subject should be so mean, and the verse so pompous; that the least things in his poetry, as in a microscope, should grow great and formidable to the eye; especially considering that, not understanding French, he had no model for his style? that he should
have

have no writer to imitate, and himself be inimitable? that he should do all this before he was twenty? at an age which is usually pleased with a glare of false thoughts, little turns, and unnatural fustian? at an age, at which Cowley, Dryden, and I had almost said Virgil, were inconsiderable? so soon was his imagination at its full strength, his judgement ripe, and his humour complete.

This poem was written for his own diversion without any design of publication. It was communicated but to *me*: but soon spread, and fell into the hands of pirates. It was put out, vilely mangled, by Ben Bragge; *and impudently said to be corrected by the author*. This grievance is now grown more epidemical; and no man now has a right to his own thoughts; or a title to his own writings. Xenophon answered the Persian, who demanded his arms, “We have nothing now left but our arms and our valour; if we surrender the one, how shall we make use of the other?” Poets have nothing but their wits and their writings; and if they are plundered of the latter, I don’t see what good the former can do them. To pirate, and publickly own it, to prefix their names to
the

the works they steal, to own and avow the theft, I believe, was never yet heard of but in England. It will sound oddly to posterity, that, in a polite nation, in an enlightened age, under the direction of the most wise, most learned, and most generous encouragers of knowledge in the world, the property of a mechanick should be better secured than that of a scholar; that the poorest manual operations should be more valued than the noblest products of the brain; that it should be felony to rob a cobbler of a pair of shoes, and no crime to deprive the best author of his whole subsistence; that nothing should make a man a sure title to his own writings but the stupidity of them; that the works of Dryden should meet with less encouragement than those of his own, Flecknoe, or Blackmore; that Tillotson and St. George, Tom Thumb and Temple, should be set on an equal foot. This is the reason why this very Paper has been so long delayed; and while the most impudent and scandalous libels are publicly vended by the pirates, this innocent work is forced to steal abroad as if it were a libel.

Our present writers are by these wretches reduced to the same condition Virgil was, when the centurion seized on his estate. But I don't doubt but I can fix upon the Mæcenas of the present age, that will retrieve them from it. But, whatever effect this piracy may have upon us, it contributed very much to the advantage of Mr. Philips; it helped him to a reputation, which he neither desired nor expected, and to the honour of being put upon a work of which he did not think himself capable; but the event shewed his modesty. And it was reasonable to hope, that he, who could raise mean subjects so high, should still be more elevated on greater themes; that he, that could draw such noble ideas from a shilling, could not fail upon such a subject as the duke of Marlborough, *which is capable of heightening even the most low and trifling genius.* And, indeed, most of the great works which have been produced in the world have been owing less to the poet than the patron. Men of the greatest genius are sometimes lazy, and want a spur; often modest, and dare not venture in publick; they certainly know their faults in the worst things; and even their best things

they are not fond of, because the idea of what they ought to be is far above what they are. This induced me to believe that Virgil desired his work might be burnt, had not the same Augustus, that desired him to write them preserved them from destruction. A scribbling beau may imagine a Poet *may* be induced to write, by the very pleasure he finds in writing; but that is seldom, when people are necessitated to it. I have known men row, and use very hard labour, for diversion, which if they had been tied to, they would have thought themselves very unhappy.

But to return to *Blenheim*, that work so much admired by some, and censured by others. I have often wished he had wrote it in Latin, that he might be out of the reach of the empty criticks, who could have as little understood his meaning in that language as they do his beauties in his own.

False criticks have been the plague of all ages; Milton himself, in a very polite court, has been compared to the rumbling of a wheelbarrow: he had been on the wrong side, and therefore could not be a good poet. *And this, perhaps, may be Mr. Philips's case.*

But

But I take generally the ignorance of his readers to be the occasion of their dislike. People, that have formed their taste upon the French writers, can have no relish for Philips: they admire points and turns, and consequently have no judgement of what is great and majestic: he must look little in their eyes, when he soars so high as to be almost out of their view. I cannot therefore allow any admirer of the French to be a judge of Blenheim, nor any who takes Bouhours for a compleat critick. He generally judges of the ancients by the moderns, and not the moderns by the ancients; he takes those passages of their own authors to be really sublime which come the nearest to it; he often calls that a noble and a great thought which is only a pretty and fine one, and has more instances of the sublime out of Ovid de Tristibus, than he has out of all Virgil.

I shall allow, therefore, only those to be judges of Philips, who make the ancients, and particularly Virgil, their standard.

But, before I enter on this subject, I shall consider what is particular in the style of Philips, and examine what ought to be the style

of heroick poetry, and next inquire how far he is come up to that style.

His style is particular, because he lays aside rhyme, and writes in blank verse, and uses old words, and frequently postpones the adjective to the substantive, and the substantive to the verb; and leaves out little particles, *a*, and *the*; *her*, and *his*; and uses frequent appositions. Now let us examine, whether these alterations of style be conformable to the true sublime.

* * * * *

W A L S H.

WILLIAM WALSH, the son of Joseph Walsh, Esq. of Abberley in Worcesterhire, was born in 1663, as appears from the account of Wood: who relates, that at the age of fifteen he became, in 1678, a gentleman commoner of Wadham College.

He left the university without a degree, and pursued his studies at London and at home; that he studied, in whatever place, is apparent from the effect; for he became, in Mr. Dryden's opinion, *the best critick in the nation.*

He was not, however, merely a critick or a scholar, but a man of fashion, and, as Dennis remarks, ostentatiously splendid in his dress. He was likewise a member of parliament and a

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courtier.

courtier, knight of the shire for his native county in several parliaments; in another the representative of Richmond in Yorkshire; and gentleman of the horse to Queen Anne, under the duke of Somerset.

Some of his verses shew him to have been a zealous friend to the Revolution; but his political ardour did not abate his reverence or kindness for Dryden, to whom he gave a Dissertation on Virgil's Pastorals, in which, however studied, he discovers some ignorance of the laws of French versification.

In 1705, he began to correspond with Mr. Pope, in whom he discovered very early the power of poetry. Their letters are written upon the pastoral comedy of the Italians, and those pastorals which Pope was then preparing to publish.

The kindnesses which are first experienced are seldom forgotten. Pope always retained a grateful memory of Walsh's notice, and mentioned him in one of his latter pieces among those that had encouraged his juvenile studies.

—Granville the polite,

And knowing Walsh, would tell me I could write.

In

In his Essay on Criticism he had given him more splendid praise: and, in the opinion of his learned commentator, sacrificed a little of his judgement to his gratitude.

The time of his death I have not learned. It must have happened between 1707, when he wrote to Pope; and 1711, when Pope praised him in his Essay. The epitaph makes him forty-six years old: if Wood's account be right, he died in 1709.

He is known more by his familiarity with greater men, than by any thing done or written by himself.

His works are not numerous. In prose he wrote *Eugenia, a defence of women*; which Dryden honoured with a Preface.

Esculapius, or the Hospital of Fools, published after his death.

A collection of Letters and Poems, amorous and gallant, was published in the volumes called Dryden's Miscellany, and some other occasional pieces.

To his Poems and Letters is prefixed a very judicious preface upon Epistolary Composition and Amorous Poetry.

In his *Golden Age restored*, there was something of humour, while the facts were recent; but it now strikes no longer. In his imitation of Horace, the first stanzas are happily turned, and in all his writings there are pleasing passages. He has however more elegance than vigour, and seldom rises higher than to be pretty.

DRYDEN.

D R Y D E N.

OF the great poet whose life I am about to delineate, the curiosity which his reputation must excite, will require a display more ample than can now be given. His contemporaries, however they revered his genius, left his life unwritten; and nothing therefore can be known beyond what casual mention and uncertain tradition have supplied.

JOHN DRYDEN was born August 9, 1631, at Aldwinckle near Oundle, the son of Erasmus Dryden of Tichmarsh; who was the third son of Sir Erasmus Dryden, Baronet, of Canons Ashby. All these places are in Northamptonshire; but the original stock of the family was in the county of Huntingdon.

He

He is reported by his last biographer, Derrick, to have inherited from his father an estate of two hundred a year, and to have been bred, as was said, an Anabaptist. For either of these particulars no authority is given. Such a fortune ought to have secured him from that poverty which seems always to have oppressed him; or, if he had wasted it, to have made him ashamed of publishing his necessities. But though he had many enemies, who undoubtedly examined his life with a scrutiny sufficiently malicious, I do not remember that he is ever charged with waste of his patrimony. He was indeed sometimes reproached for his first religion. I am therefore inclined to believe that Derrick's intelligence was partly true, and partly erroneous.

From Westminster School, where he was instructed as one of the king's scholars by Dr. Busby, whom he long after continued to reverence, he was in 1650 elected to one of the Westminster scholarships at Cambridge*.

Of his school performances has appeared only a poem on the death of Lord Hastings,

* He went off to Trinity College, and was admitted to a Bachelor's Degree in 1653. H.

composed with great ambition of such conceits as, notwithstanding the reformation begun by Waller and Denham, the example of Cowley still kept in reputation. Lord Hastings died of the small-pox; and his poet has made of the pustules first rosebuds, and then gems; at last exalts them into stars; and says,

No comet need foretell his change drew on,
Whose corps might seem a constellation.

At the university he does not appear to have been eager of poetical distinction, or to have lavished his early wit either on fictitious subjects or public occasions. He probably considered that he who purposed to be an author, ought first to be a student. He obtained, whatever was the reason, no fellowship in the College. Why he was excluded cannot now be known, and it is vain to guess; had he thought himself injured, he knew how to complain. In the life of Plutarch he mentions his education in the College with gratitude; but, in a prologue at Oxford, he has these lines:

Oxford to him a dearer name shall be
Than his own mother-university;

Thebes

Thebes did his rude unknowing youth engage;
He chooses Athens in his riper age.

It was not till the death of Cromwell, in 1658, that he became a public candidate for fame, by publishing *Heroic Stanzas on the late Lord Protector*; which, compared with the verses of Sprat and Waller on the same occasion, were sufficient to raise great expectations of the rising poet.

When the king was restored, Dryden, like the other panegyrists of usurpation, changed his opinion, or his profession, and published *ASTREA REDUX, a poem on the happy restoration and return of his most sacred Majesty King Charles the Second*.

The reproach of inconstancy was, on this occasion, shared with such numbers, that it produced neither hatred nor disgrace! if he changed, he changed with the nation. It was, however, not totally forgotten when his reputation raised him enemies.

The same year he praised the new king in a second poem on his restoration. In the *ASTREA* was the line,

An horrid *silliness* first invades the ear,
And in that silence we a tempest fear.

for which he was persecuted with perpetual ridicule, perhaps with more than was deserved. *Silence* is indeed mere privation; and, so considered, cannot *invade*; but privation likewise certainly is *darkness*, and probably *cold*; yet poetry has never been refused the right of ascribing effects or agency to them as to positive powers. No man scruples to say that *darkness* hinders him from his work; or that *cold* has killed the plants. Death is also privation; yet who has made any difficulty of assigning to Death a dart and the power of striking?

In settling the order of his works there is some difficulty; for, even when they are important enough to be formally offered to a patron, he does not commonly date his dedication; the time of writing and publishing is not always the same; nor can the first editions be easily found, if even from them could be obtained the necessary information.

The time at which his first play was exhibited is not certainly known, because it was not printed till it was some years afterwards altered and revived; but since the plays are said to be printed in the order in which they were written, from the dates of some, those of others may be
in-

inferred ; and thus it may be collected that in 1663, in the thirty-second year of his life, he commenced a writer for the stage ; compelled undoubtedly by necessity, for he appears never to have loved that exercise of his genius, or to have much pleased himself with his own dramas.

Of the stage, when he had once invaded it, he kept possession for many years ; not indeed without the competition of rivals who sometimes prevailed, or the censure of criticks, which was often poignant and often just ; but with such a degree of reputation as made him at least secure of being heard, whatever might be the final determination of the publick.

His first piece was a comedy called the *Wild Gallant*. He began with no happy auguries ; for his performance was so much disapproved, that he was compelled to recall it, and change it from its imperfect state to the form in which it now appears, and which is yet sufficiently defective to vindicate the criticks.

I wish that there were no necessity of following the progress of his theatrical fame, or tracing the meanders of his mind through the whole series of his dramatick performances ; it
will

will be fit; however, to enumerate them, and to take especial notice of those that are distinguished by any peculiarity, intrinsic or concomitant; for the composition and fate of eight and twenty dramas include too much of a poetical life to be omitted.

In 1664 he published the *Rival Ladies*, which he dedicated to the Earl of Orrery, a man of high reputation both as a writer and a statesman. In this play he made his essay of dramatick rhyme; which he defends in his dedication, with sufficient certainty of a favourable hearing; for Orrery was himself a writer of rhyming tragedies.

He then joined with Sir Robert Howard in the *Indian Queen*, a tragedy in rhyme. The parts which either of them wrote are not distinguished.

The *Indian Emperor* was published in 1667. It is a tragedy in rhyme, intended for a sequel to *Howard's Indian Queen*. Of this connection notice was given to the audience by printed bills, distributed at the door; an expedient supposed to be ridiculed in the *Rehearsal*, when Bayes tells how many reams he has printed, to
instill

instill into the audience some conception of his plot.

In this play is the description of Night, which *Rymer* has made famous by preferring it to those of all other poets.

The practice of making tragedies in rhyme was introduced soon after the Restoration, as it seems by the earl of Orrery, in compliance with the opinion of Charles the Second, who had formed his taste by the French theatre; and Dryden, who wrote, and made no difficulty of declaring that he wrote only to please, and who perhaps knew that by his dexterity of versification he was more likely to excel others in rhyme than without it, very readily adopted his master's preference. He therefore made rhyming tragedies, till, by the prevalence of manifest propriety, he seems to have grown ashamed of making them any longer.

To this play is prefixed a very vehement defence of dramattick rhyme, in confutation of the preface to the *Duke of Lerma*, in which Sir Robert Howard had censured it.

In 1667 he published *Annus Mirabilis*, the *Year of Wonders*, which may be esteemed one of his most elaborate works.

It

It is addressed to Sir Robert Howard by a letter, which is not properly a dedication; and, writing to a poet, he has interspersed many critical observations, of which some are common, and some perhaps ventured without much consideration. He began, even now, to exercise the domination of conscious genius, by recommending his own performance: “ I
“ am satisfied that as the Prince and General
“ [Rupert and Monk] are incomparably the
“ best subjects I ever had, so what I have
“ written on them is much better than what
“ I have performed on any other. As I have
“ endeavoured to adorn my poem with noble
“ thoughts, so much more to express those
“ thoughts with elocution ”

It is written in quatrains, or heroick stanzas of four lines; a measure which he had learned from the *Gondibert* of Davenant, and which he then thought the most majestick that the English language affords. Of this stanza he mentions the encumbrances, encreased as they were by the exactness which the age required. It was, throughout his life, very much his custom to recommend his works, by representation of the difficulties that he had encountered,

without appearing to have sufficiently considered, that where there is no difficulty there is no praise.

There seems to be in the conduct of Sir Robert Howard and Dryden towards each other, something that is not now easily to be explained. Dryden, in his dedication to the earl of Orrery, had defended dramattick rhyme; and Howard, in the preface to a collection of plays, had censured his opinion. Dryden vindicated himself in his *Dialogue on Dramattick Poetry*; Howard, in his preface to the *Duke of Lerma*, animadverted on the Vindication; and Dryden, in a Preface to the *Indian Emperor*, replied to the Animadversions with great asperity, and almost with contumely. The dedication to this play is dated the year in which the *Annus Mirabilis* was published. Here appears a strange inconsistency; but Langbaine affords some help, by relating that the answer to Howard was not published in the first edition of the play, but was added when it was afterwards reprinted; and as the *Duke of Lerma* did not appear till 1668, the same year in which the dialogue was published, there was time enough for enmity to grow up between authors, who,
writing

writing both for the theatre, were naturally rivals.

He was now so much distinguished, that in 1668 he succeeded Sir William Davenant as poet-laureat. The salary of the laureat had been raised in favour of Jonson, by Charles the First, from an hundred marks to one hundred pounds a year, and a tierce of wine; a revenue in those days not inadequate to the conveniences of life.

The same year he published his Essay on Dramatick Poetry, an elegant and instructive dialogue, in which we are told by Prior, that the principal character is meant to represent the duke of Dorset. This work seems to have given Addison a model for his Dialogues upon Medals.

Secret Love, or the Maiden Queen (1668) is a tragi-comedy. In the preface he discusses a curious question, whether a poet can judge well of his own productions? and determines very justly, that, of the plan and disposition, and all that can be reduced to principles of science, the author may depend upon his own opinion; but that, in those parts where fancy predominates, self-love may easily deceive.

He might have observed, that what is good only because it pleases, cannot be pronounced good till it has been found to please.

Sir Martin Marr-all (1668) is a comedy, published without preface or dedication, and at first without the name of the author. Langbaine charges it, like most of the rest, with plagiarism; and observes that the song is translated from Voiture, allowing however that both the sense and measure are exactly observed.

The Tempest (1670) is an alteration of Shakespeare's play, made by Dryden in conjunction with Davenant, "whom," says he, "I found
 " of so quick a fancy, that nothing was proposed to him in which he could not suddenly
 " produce a thought extremely pleasant and
 " surprising; and those first thoughts of his,
 " contrary to the Latin proverb, were not always the least happy, and as his fancy was
 " quick, so likewise were the products of it
 " remote and new. He borrowed not of any
 " other, and his imaginations were such as
 " could not easily enter into any other man."

The effect produced by the conjunction of these two powerful minds was, that to Shakespeare's

speare's monster Caliban is added a sister-monster Sycorax; and a woman, who, in the original play, had never seen a man, is in this brought acquainted with a man that had never seen a woman.

About this time, in 1673, Dryden seems to have had his quiet much disturbed by the success of the *Empress of Morocco*, a tragedy written in rhyme by *Elkanah Settle*; which was so much applauded, as to make him think his supremacy of reputation in some danger. Settle had not only been prosperous on the stage, but, in the confidence of success, had published his play, with sculptures and a preface of defiance. Here was one offence added to another; and, for the last blast of inflammation, it was acted at Whitehall by the court-ladies.

Dryden could not now repress these emotions, which he called indignation, and others jealousy; but wrote upon the play and the dedication such criticism as malignant impatience could pour out in haste.

Of Settle he gives this character. "He's an
 "animal of a most deplored understanding,
 "without conversation. His being is in a
 "twilight of sense, and some glimmering of
 K 3 "thought,

“ thought, which he can never fashion into
 “ wit or English. His style is boisterous and
 “ rough-hewn, his rhyme incorrigibly lewd,
 “ and his numbers perpetually harsh and ill-
 “ sounding. The little talent which he has,
 “ is fancy. He sometimes labours with a
 “ thought; but, with the pudder he makes to
 “ bring it into the world, ’tis commonly still-
 “ born; so that for want of learning and elo-
 “ cution, he will never be able to express any
 “ thing either naturally or justly !”

This is not very decent; yet this is one of
 the pages in which criticism prevails over bru-
 tal fury. He proceeds: “ He has a heavy
 “ hand at fools, and a great felicity in writing
 “ nonsense for them. Fools they will be in
 “ spite of him. His King, his two Empreſſes,
 “ his villain, and his ſub-villain, nay his hero,
 “ have all a certain natural caſt of the father—
 “ their folly was born and bred in them, and
 “ ſomething of the Elkanah will be viſible.”

This is Dryden’s general declamation; I
 will not withhold from the reader a particular
 remark. Having gone through the firſt act, he
 ſays, “ To conclude this act with the moſt
 “ rumbling piece of nonſenſe ſpoken yet,

“ To

“ To flattering lightning our feign’d smiles conform,
“ form,

“ Which back’d with thunder do but gild a storm.

“ *Conform a smile to lightning, make a smile imitate lightning, and flattering lightning: lightning sure is a threatening thing. And this lightning must gild a storm. Now if I must conform by smiles to lightning, then my smiles must gild a storm too: to gild with smiles is a new invention of gilding: And gild a storm by being backed with thunder. Thunder is part of the storm; so one part of the storm must help to gild another part, and help by backing; as if a man would gild a thing the better for being backed, or having a load upon his back. So that here is gilding by conforming, smiling, lightning, backing, and thundering. The whole is as if I should say thus, I will make my counterfeit smiles look like a flattering stone-horse, which, being backed with a trooper, does but gild the battle. I am mistaken if nonsense is not here pretty thick sown. Sure the poet writ these two lines aboard some smack in a storm, and being sea-sick, spewed up a good lump of clotted nonsense at once.”*

Here is perhaps a sufficient specimen; but as the pamphlet, though Dryden's, has never been thought worthy of republication, and is not easily to be found, it may gratify curiosity to quote it more largely.

Whene'er she bleeds,
He no severer a damnation needs,
That dares pronounce the sentence of her death,
Than the infection that attends that breath.

That attends that breath.—The poet is at *breath* again; *breath* can never 'scape him; and here he brings in a *breath* that must be *infectious* with *pronouncing* a sentence; and this sentence is not to be pronounced till the condemned party *bleeds*; that is, she must be executed first, and sentenced after; and the *pronouncing* of this *sentence* will be infectious; that is, others will catch the disease of that sentence, and this infecting of others will torment a man's self. The whole is thus; *when she bleeds, thou needest no greater hell or torment to thyself, than infecting of others by pronouncing a sentence upon her.* What hodge-podge does he make here! Never was Dutch grout such clogging, thick, indigestible stuff.

“ But

“ But this is but a taste to stay the stomach;
“ we shall have a more plentiful mess pre-
“ sently.

“ Now to dish up the poet’s broth, that I
“ promised:

For when we’re dead, and our freed souls enlarg’d,
Of nature’s grosser burden we’re discharg’d,
Then gently, as a happy lover’s sigh,
Like wandering meteors through the air we’ll fly,
And in our airy walk, as subtle guests,
We’ll steal into our cruel fathers breasts, [sphere:
There read their souls, and track each passion’s.
See how Revenge moves there, Ambition here.
And in their orbs view the dark characters
Of sieges, ruins, murders, blood and wars.
We’ll blot out all those hideous draughts, and write
Pure and white forms; then with a radiant light
Their breasts encircle, till their passions be
Gentle as nature in its infancy:
Till soften’d by our charms their furies cease,
And their revenge resolves into a peace.
Thus by our death their quarrel ends, [friends.
Whom living we made foes, dead we’ll make

“ If this be not a very liberal mess, I will
“ refer myself to the stomach of any moderate
“ guest. And a rare mess it is, far excelling
“ any Westminster white-broth. It is a kind

“ of

“ of gibblet porridge, made of the gibblets of
“ a couple of young geese, stodged full of
“ *meteors, orbs, spheres, track, hideous draughts,*
“ *dark characters, white forms, and radiant lights,*
“ designed not only to please appetite, and in-
“ dulse luxury; but it is also physical, being
“ an approved medicine to purge choler: for it
“ is propounded by Morena, as a receipt to
“ cure their fathers of their choleric humours:
“ and, were it written in characters as barbarous
“ as the words, might very well pass for a doc-
“ tor’s bill. To conclude, it is porridge, ’tis
“ a receipt, ’tis a pig with a pudding in the
“ belly, ’tis I know not what; for, certainly,
“ never any one that pretended to write sense,
“ had the impudence before to put such stuff
“ as this into the mouths of those that were to
“ speak it before an audience, whom he did
“ not take to be all fools; and after that to
“ print it too, and expose it to the examina-
“ tion of the world. But let us see, what we
“ can make of this stuff:

For when we’re dead, and our freed souls enlarg’d—

“ Here he tells us what it is to be *dead*; it is to
“ have *our freed souls set free*. Now if to have

“ a foul fet free, is to be dead, then to have
“ a *freed soul* fet free, is to have a dead man
“ die.

Then gentle, as a happy lover's sigh—

“ They two like one *sigh*, and that one *sigh*
“ like two wandering meteors,

—Shall fly through the air—

“ That is, they shall mount above like
“ falling stars, or else they shall skip like two
“ Jacks with lanthons, or Will with a wisp,
“ and Madge with a candle.”

And in their airy walk steal into their cruel fathers breasts, like subtle guests. So “ that their
“ *fathers breasts* must be in an *airy walk*, an airy
“ *walk* of a *flier*. *And there they will read their*
“ *souls, and track the spheres of their passions.*
“ That is, these walking fliers, Jack with a
“ lanthorn, &c. will put on his spectacles,
“ and fall a *reading souls*, and put on his pumps
“ and fall a *tracking of spheres* : so that he will
“ read and run, walk and fly at the same time!
“ Oh! Nimble Jack. *Then he will see, how*
“ *revenge here, how ambition there*—The birds
“ will hop about. *And then view the dark cha-*
“ *rafters*

“ *raçters of sieges, ruins, murders, blood, and*
 “ *wars, in their orbs: Track the characters to*
 “ *their forms ! Oh ! rare sport for Jack.*
 “ *Never was place so full of game as these*
 “ *breasts ! You cannot stir but flush a sphere*
 “ *start a character, or unkennel an orb !*”

Settle's is said to have been the first play embellished with sculptures; those ornaments seem to have given poor Dryden great disturbance. He tries however to ease his pain, by venting his malice in a parody.

“ The poet has not only been so impudent
 “ to expose all this stuff, but so arrogant to
 “ defend it with an epistle; like a faucy booth-
 “ keeper, that, when he had put a cheat upon
 “ the people, would wrangle and fight with
 “ any that would not like it, or would offer
 “ to discover it; for which arrogance our poet
 “ receives this correction; and to jerk him a
 “ little the sharper, I will not transpose his
 “ verse, but by the help of his own words
 “ transnon-sense sense, that, by my stuff, peo-
 “ ple may judge the better what his is;

“ Great Boy, thy tragedy and sculptures done
 “ From press, and plates in fleets do homeward
 “ come;

“ And

“ And in ridiculous and humble pride,
“ Their course in ballad-singers baskets guide,
“ Whose greasy twigs do all new beauties take,
“ From the gay shews thy dainty sculptures make.
“ Thy lines a mess of rhyming nonsense yield,
“ A senseless tale, with flattering fustian fill’d.
“ No grain of sense does in our line appear,
“ Thy words big bulks of boisterous bombast bear.
“ With noise they move, and from players mouths
 “ rebound, [sound
“ When their tongues dance to thy words empty
“ By thee inspir’d the rumbling verses roll,
“ As if that rhyme and bombast lent a soul :
“ And with that soul they seem taught duty too,
“ To huffing words does humble nonsense bow,
“ As if it would thy worthless worth enhance,
“ To th’ lowest rank of fops thy praise advance ;
“ To whom, by instinct, all thy stuff is dear ;
“ Their loud claps echo to the theatre.
“ From breaths of fools thy commendation spreads,
“ Fame sings thy praise with mouths of logger-
 “ heads.
“ With noise and laughing each thy fustian greets,
“ ’Tis clapt by quires of empty-headed cits,
“ Who have their tribute sent, and homage given,
“ As men in whispers send loud noise to heaven.
“ Thus I have daubed him with his own
‘ puddle : and now we are come from aboard
 “ his

“his dancing, masking, rebounding, breathing fleet; and as if we had landed at Gotham, we meet nothing but fools and nonsense.”

Such was the criticism to which the genius of Dryden could be reduced, between rage and terror; rage with little provocation, and terror with little danger. To see the highest minds thus levelled with the meanest, may produce some solace to the consciousness of weakness, and some mortification to the pride of wisdom. But let it be remembered, that minds are not levelled in their powers but when they are first levelled in their desires. Dryden and Settle had both placed their happiness in the claps of multitudes.

An Evening's Love or the *Mock Astrologer*, a comedy, (1671), is dedicated to the illustrious duke of Newcastle, whom he courts by adding to his praises those of his lady, not only as a lover but a partner of his studies. It is unpleasant to think how many names, once celebrated, are since forgotten. Of Newcastle's works nothing is now known but his treatise on horsemanship.

This

The Preface seems very elaborately written, and contains many just remarks on the Fathers of the English drama. Shakspeare's plots, he says, are in the hundred novels of *Cinthio*; those of Beaumont and Fletcher in Spanish Stories; Jonson only made them for himself. His criticisms upon tragedy, comedy, and farce, are judicious and profound. He endeavours to defend the immorality of some of his comedies by the example of former writers; which is only to say, that he was not the first nor perhaps the greatest offender. Against those that accused him of plagiarism he alleges a favourable expression of the king: "He only
"desired that they, who accuse me of thefts,
"would steal him plays like mine;" and then relates how much labour he spends in fitting for the English stage what he borrows from others.

Tyrannick Love, or the Virgin Martyr, (1672), was another tragedy in rhyme, conspicuous for many passages of strength and elegance, and many of empty noise and ridiculous turbulence. The rants of Maximin have been always the sport of criticism; and were at
length,

length, if his own confession may be trusted, the shame of the writer.

Of this play he takes care to let the reader know, that it was contrived and written in seven weeks. Want of time was often his excuse, or perhaps shortness of time was his private boast in the form of an apology.

It was written before the *Conquest of Granada*, but published after it. The design is to recommend piety. "I considered that pleasure was
" not the only end of poetry, and that even the
" instructions of morality were not so wholly
" the business of a poet, as that precepts and
" examples of piety were to be omitted; for
" to leave that employment altogether to the
" clergy, were to forget that religion was first
" taught in verse, which the laziness or dull-
" ness of succeeding priesthood turned after-
" wards into prose." Thus foolishly could Dryden write, rather than not shew his malice to the parsons.

The two parts of the *Conquest of Granada* (1672) are written with a seeming determination to glut the publick with dramatick wonders, to exhibit in its highest elevation a theatrical meteor of incredible love and impossible
valour,

valour, and to leave no room for a wilder flight to the extravagance of posterity. All the rays of romantick heat, whether amorous or warlike, glow in Almanzor by a kind of concentration. He is above all laws; he is exempt from all restraints; he ranges the world at will, and governs wherever he appears. He fights without enquiring the cause, and loves in spite of the obligations of justice, of rejection by his mistress, and of prohibition from the dead. Yet the scenes are, for the most part, delightful; they exhibit a kind of illustrious depravity, and majestic madness, such as, if it is sometimes despised, is often revered, and in which the ridiculous is mingled with the astonishing.

In the Epilogue to the second part of the *Conquest of Granada*, Dryden indulges his favourite pleasure of discrediting his predecessors; and this Epilogue he has defended by a long postscript. He had promised a second dialogue, in which he should more fully treat of the virtues and faults of the English poets, who have written in the dramatick, epick, or lyrick way. This promise was never formally performed; but, with respect to the dramatick

writers, he has given us in his prefaces, and in this postscript, something equivalent; but his purpose being to exalt himself by the comparison, he shews faults distinctly, and only praises excellence in general terms.

A play thus written, in professed defiance of probability, naturally drew upon itself the vultures of the theatre. One of the criticks that attacked it was *Martin Clifford*, to whom *Sprat* addressed the *Life of Cowley*, with such veneration of his critical powers as might naturally excite great expectations of instructions from his remarks. But let honest credulity beware of receiving characters from contemporary writers. Clifford's remarks, by the favour of Dr. *Percy*, were at last obtained; and, that no man may ever want them more, I will extract enough to satisfy all reasonable desire.

In the first Letter his observation is only general: "You do live," says he, "in as much
"ignorance and darkness as you did in the
"womb: your writings are like a Jack-of-all
"trade's shop; they have a variety, but nothing
"of value; and if thou art not the dullest
"plant-animal that ever the earth produced,
"all

“all that I have conversed with are strangely
“mistaken in thee.”

In the second he tells him that Almanzor is not more copied from Achilles than from Ancient Pistol. “But I am,” says he, “strangely
“mistaken if I have not seen this very *Almanzor* of yours in some disguise about this
“town, and passing under another name.
“Pr’ythee tell me true, was not this Huffcap
“once the *Indian Emperor*; and at another
“time did he not call himself *Maximin*? Was
“not *Lyndaraxa* once called *Almeria*? I mean
“under *Montezuma* the Indian Emperor. I
“protest and vow they are either the same, or
“so alike that I cannot, for my heart, distinguish one from the other. You are therefore a strange unconscionable thief; thou art
“not content to steal from others, but dost
“rob thy poor wretched self too.”

Now was *Settle*’s time to take his revenge. He wrote a vindication of his own lines; and, if he is forced to yield any thing, makes reprisals upon his enemy. To say that his answer is equal to the censure, is no high commendation. To expose Dryden’s method of analysing his expressions, he tries the same experi-

ment upon the same description of the ships in the *Indian Emperor*, of which however he does not deny the excellence; but intends to shew, that by studied misconstruction every thing may be equally represented as ridiculous. After so much of Dryden's elegant animadversions, justice requires that something of Settle's should be exhibited. The following observations are therefore extracted from a quarto pamphlet of ninety-five pages:

“ Fate after him below with pain did move,
 “ And victory could scarce keep pace above.

“ These two lines, if he can shew me any
 “ sense or thought in, or any thing but bombast and noise, he shall make me believe
 “ every word in his observations on *Morocco*
 “ sense.

“ In the *Empress of Morocco* were these lines:

“ I'll travel then to some remoter sphere,
 “ Till I find out new worlds, and crown you there.

“ On which Dryden made this remark:

“ I believe our learned author takes a sphere
 “ for a country; the sphere of Morocco, as if
 “ Morocco were the globe of earth and water;
 “ but a globe is no sphere neither, by his leave,”

&c.

&c. “ So *sphere* must not be sense, unless it re-
 “ late to a circular motion about a globe, in
 “ which sense the astronomers use it. I would
 “ desire him to expound those lines in *Granada*:

“ I’ll to the turrets of the palace go,
 “ And add new fire to those that fight below.
 “ Thence, Hero-like, with torches by my side,
 “ (Far be the omen tho’) my Love I’ll guide.
 “ No, like his better fortune I’ll appear,
 “ With open arms, loose veil, and flowing hair,
 “ Just flying forward from my rowling sphere. }

“ I wonder, if he be so strict, how he dares
 “ make so bold with *sphere* himself, and be so
 “ critical in other men’s writings. Fortune is
 “ fancied standing on a globe not on a *sphere*,
 “ as he told us in the first act.

“ Because *Elkanah’s Similies are the most unlike*
 “ *things to what they are compared in the world*,
 “ I’ll venture to start a simile in his *Annus*
 “ *Mirabilis*: he gives this poetical description
 “ of the ship called the *London*:

“ The goodly London in her gallant trim,
 “ The Phenix-daughter of the vanquish’d old,
 “ Like a rich bride does to the ocean swim,
 “ And on her shadow rides in floating gold.
 “ Her flag aloft spread rustling in the wind,

“ And sanguine streamers seem’d the flood to fire:
 “ The weaver, charm’d with what his loom de-
 “ Goes on to sea, and knows not to retire.[sign’d,
 “ With roomy decks her guns of mighty strength,
 “ Whose low-laid mouths each mounting billow
 laves,
 “ Deep in her draught, and warlike in her length,
 “ She seems a sea-wasp flying on the waves.

“ What a wonderful pother is here, to make
 “ all these poetical beautifications of a ship!
 “ that is, a *phenix* in the first stanza, and but a
 “ *wasp* in the last: nay, to make his humble
 “ comparison of a *wasp* more ridiculous, he
 “ does not say it flies upon the waves as nim-
 “ bly as a wasp, or the like, but it seem’d a
 “ *wasp*. But our author at the writing of this
 “ was not in his altitudes, to compare ships to
 “ floating palaces; a comparison to the purpose,
 “ was a perfection he did not arrive to till his
 “ *Indian Emperor’s* days. But perhaps his simi-
 “ litude has more in it than we imagine; this
 “ ship had a great many guns in her, and they,
 “ put all together, made the sting in the wasp’s
 “ tail: for this is all the reason I can guess,
 “ why it seem’d a *wasp*. But, because we will
 “ allow him all we can to help out, let it be a
 “ *phenix*

“ *phenix sea-wasp*, and the rarity of such an
 “ animal may do much towards heightening
 “ the fancy.

“ It had been much more to his purpose, if
 “ he had designed to render the senseless play
 “ little, to have searched for some such pedan-
 “ try as this :

“ Two ifs scarce make one possibility.

“ If justice will take all and nothing give,

“ Justice, methinks, is not distributive.

“ To die or kill you is the alternative,

“ Rather than take your life, I will not live.

“ Observe, how prettily our author chops
 “ logick in heroick verse. Three such fustian
 “ canting words as *distributive*, *alternative*, and
 “ *two ifs*, no man but himself would have
 “ come within the noise of. But he’s a man
 “ of general learning, and all comes into his
 “ play.

“ ’Twould have done well too, if he could
 “ have met with a rant or two, worth the ob-
 “ servation : such as,

“ Move swiftly, Sun, and fly a lover’s pace,

“ Leave months and weeks behind thee in thy race.

“ But surely the Sun, whether he flies
“ lover’s or not a lover’s pace, leaves weeks and
“ months, nay years too, behind him in his
“ race.

“ Poor Robin, or any other of the Philoma-
“ thematicks, would have given him satisfac-
“ tion in the point.

“ If I could kill thee now, thy fate’s so low,
“ That I must stoop, ere I can give the blow.
“ But mine is fixt so far above thy crown,
“ That all thy men,
“ Piled on thy back, can never pull it down.

“ Now where that is, Almanzor’s fate is fixt,
“ I cannot guess; but wherever it is, I believe
“ Almanzor, and think that all Abdalla’s sub-
“ jects, piled upon one another, might not
“ pull down his fate so well as without piling:
“ besides, I think Abdalla so wise a man, that
“ if Almanzor had told him piling his men
“ upon his back might do the feat, he would
“ scarce bear such a weight, for the pleasure of
“ the exploit; but it is a huff, and let Abdalla
“ do it if he dare.

“ The people like a headlong torrent go,
“ And every dam they break or overflow.

“ But

“ But unoppos’d, they either lose their force,
“ Or wind in volumes to their former course.

“ A very pretty allusion, contrary to all sense
“ or reason. Torrents, I take it, let them
“ wind never so much, can never return to
“ their former course, unless he can suppose
“ that fountains can go upwards, which is im-
“ possible: nay more, in the foregoing page
“ he tells us so too. A trick of a very un-
“ faithful memory,

“ But can no more than fountains upward flow.

“ which of a *torrent*, which signifies a rapid
“ stream, is much more impossible. Besides,
“ if he goes to quibble, and say that it is
“ possible by art water may be made return,
“ and the same water run twice in one and the
“ same channel; then he quite confutes what
“ he says; for, it is by being opposed, that it
“ runs into its former course; for all engines
“ that make water so return, do it by compul-
“ sion and opposition. Or, if he means a
“ headlong torrent for a tide, which would be
“ ridiculous, yet they do not wind in volumes,
“ but come fore-right back (if their upright
“ lies

“ lies straight to their former course), and that
 “ by opposition of the sea-water, that drives
 “ them back again.

“ And for fancy, when he lights of any
 “ thing like it, 'tis a wonder, if it be not bor-
 “ rowed. As here, for example of, I find
 “ this fanciful thought in his *Ann. Mirab.*

“ Old father Thames raised up his reverend head;
 “ But fear'd the fate of Simois would return;
 “ Deep in his ooze he sought his fedgy bed;
 “ And shrunk his waters back into his urn.

This is stolen from Cowley's *Davidis*, p. 6.

“ Swift Jordan started, and strait backward fled,
 “ Hiding amongst thick reeds his aged head.
 “ And when the Spaniards their assault begin,
 “ At once beat those without and those within.

“ This Almanzor speaks of himself; and
 “ sure for one man to conquer an army within
 “ the city, and another without the city, at
 “ once, is something difficult: but this flight
 “ is pardonable, to some we meet with in
 “ *Granada*. Osmin, speaking of Almanzor:
 “ Who, like a tempest that outrides the wind,
 “ Made a just battle, ere the bodies join'd.

“ Pray

“ Pray what does this honourable person mean
 “ by a *tempest that outrides the wind*! A tempest
 “ that outrides itself. To suppose a tempest
 “ without wind, is as bad as supposing a man
 “ to walk without feet; for if he supposes the
 “ tempest to be something distinct from the
 “ wind, yet as being the effect of wind only,
 “ to come before the cause is a little preposter-
 “ ous: so that if he takes it one way, or if he
 “ takes it the other, those two *ifs* will scarce
 “ make one *possibility*.” Enough of Settle.

Marriage à la mode (1673) is a comedy dedicated to the Earl of Rochester; whom he acknowledges not only as the defender of his poetry, but the promoter of his fortune. Langbaine places this play in 1673. The earl of Rochester therefore was the famous Wilmot, whom yet tradition always represents as an enemy to Dryden, and who is mentioned by him with some disrespect in the preface to *Juvenal*.

The Affignation, or Love in a Nunnery, a comedy (1673), was driven off the stage, *against the opinion*, as the author says, *of the best judges*. It is dedicated, in a very elegant address, to Sir Charles Sedley; in which he finds an opportunity

portunity for his usual complaint of hard treatment and unreasonable censure.

Amboyna (1673) is a tiffue of mingled dialogue in verse and prose, and was perhaps written in less time than *The Virgin Martyr*; though the author thought not fit either ostentatiously or mournfully to tell how little labour it cost him, or at how short a warning he produced it. It was a temporary performance, written in the time of the Dutch war, to inflame the nation against their enemies; to whom he hopes, as he declares in his Epilogue, to make his poetry not less destructive than that by which Tyrtæus of old animated the Spartans. This play was written in the second Dutch war in 1673.

Troilus and Cressida (1679) is a play altered from Shakspeare; but so altered, that even in Lambaine's opinion, "the last scene in the third act is a masterpiece." It is introduced by a discourse on "the grounds of criticism in tragedy," to which I suspect that Rymer's book had given occasion.

The *Spanish Fryar* (1681) is a tragi-comedy, eminent for the happy coincidence and coalition of the two plots. As it was written against the Papists, it would naturally at that

time

time have friends and enemies; and partly by the popularity which it obtained at first, and partly by the real power both of the serious and risible part, it continued long a favourite of the publick.

It was Dryden's opinion, at least for some time, and he maintains it in the dedication of this play, that the drama required an alternation of comick and tragick scenes, and that it is necessary to mitigate by alleviations of merriment the pressure of ponderous events, and the fatigue of toilsome passions. "Whoever," says he, "cannot perform both parts, is but *half a writer for the stage.*"

The *Duke of Guise*, a tragedy (1683), written in conjunction with Lee, as *Oedipus* had been before, seems to deserve notice only for the offence which it gave to the remnant of the Covenanters, and in general to the enemies of the court, who attacked him with great violence, and were answered by him; though at last he seems to withdraw from the conflict, by transferring the greater part of the blame or merit to his partner. It happened that a contract had been made between them, by which they were to join in writing a play; and "he
"hap-

“happened,” says Dryden, “to claim the promise just upon the finishing of a poem, when I would have been glad of a little respite.—
 “*Two* thirds of it belonged to him; and to me
 “only the first scene of the play, the whole
 “fourth act, and the first half or somewhat
 “more of the fifth.”

This was a play written professedly for the party of the duke of York, whose succession was then opposed. A parallel is intended between the Leaguers of France and the Covenanters of England; and this intention produced the controversy.

Albion and Albanus (1685) is a musical drama or opera, written, like the *Duke of Guise*, against the Republicans. With what success it was performed, I have not found*.

The State of Innocence and Fall of Man (1675) is termed by him an opera: it is rather a tragedy in heroick rhyme, but of which the personages are such as cannot decently be exhibited on the stage. Some such production was

* Downes says, it was performed on a very unlucky day, viz. that on which the duke of Monmouth landed in the west; and he intimates that the consternation into which the kingdom was thrown by this event, was a reason why it was performed but six times, and was in general ill received. H.

foreseen by Marvel, who writes thus to Milton:

Or if a work so infinite be spann'd,
Jealous I was least some less skilful hand,
(Such as disquiet always what is well,
And by ill imitating would excel,)
Might hence presume the whole creation's day,
To change in scenes, and show it in a play.

It is another of his hasty productions; for the heat of his imagination raised it in a month.

This composition is addressed to the princess of Modena, then dutchess of York, in a strain of flattery which disgraces genius, and which it was wonderful that any man that knew the meaning of his own words could use without self-detestation. It is an attempt to mingle earth and heaven, by praising human excellence in the language of religion.

The preface contains an apology for heroick verse and poetick licence; by which is meant not any liberty taken in contracting or extending words, but the use of bold fictions and ambitious figures.

The reason which he gives for printing what was never acted, cannot be overpassed: "I
" was

“was induced to it in my own defence, many
“hundred copies of it being dispersed abroad
“without my knowledge or consent; and every
“one gathering new faults, it became at length
“a libel against me.” These copies as they
gathered faults were apparently manuscript;
and he lived in an age very unlike ours, if
many hundred copies of fourteen hundred lines
were likely to be transcribed. An author has
a right to print his own works, and needs not
seek an apology in falsehood; but he that could
bear to write the dedication felt no pain in
writing the preface.

Aureng Zebe (1676) is a tragedy founded on
the actions of a great prince then reigning, but
over nations not likely to employ their criticks
upon the transactions of the English stage. If
he had known and disliked his own character,
our trade was not in those times secure from
his resentment. His country is at such a dis-
tance, that the manners might be safely falsi-
fied, and the incidents feigned; for the remote-
ness of place is remarked, by Racine, to afford
the same conveniencies to a poet as length of
time.

This

This play is written in rhyme; and has the appearance of being the most elaborate of all the dramas. The personages are imperial; but the dialogue is often domestick, and therefore susceptible of sentiments accommodated to familiar incidents. The complaint of life is celebrated, and there are many other passages that may be read with pleasure.

This play is addressed to the earl of Mulgrave, afterwards duke of Buckingham, himself, if not a poet, yet a writer of verses, and a critick. In this address Dryden gave the first hints of his intention to write an epick poem. He mentions his design in terms so obscure, that he seems afraid lest his plan should be purloined, as, he says, happened to him when he told it more plainly in his preface to Juvenal. "The design," says he, "you know is great, the story English, and neither too near the present times, nor too distant from them."

All for Love, or the World well lost (1678), a tragedy founded upon the story of Antony and Cleopatra, he tells us, "is the only play which he wrote for himself;" the rest were given to the people. It is by universal consent accounted

the work in which he has admitted the fewest improprieties of style or character; but it has one fault equal to many, though rather moral than critical, that by admitting the romantick omnipotence of Love, he has recommended, as laudable and worthy of imitation, that conduct which, through all ages, the good have censured as vicious, and the bad despised as foolish.

Of this play the prologue and the epilogue, though written upon the common topicks of malicious and ignorant criticism, and without any particular relation to the characters or incidents of the drama,, are deservedly celebrated for their elegance and spriteliness.

Limberham, or the kind Keeper (1680), is a comedy, which, after the third night, was prohibited as too indecent for the stage. What gave offence was in the printing, as the author says, altered or omitted. Dryden confesses that its indecency was objected to; but Langbaine, who yet seldom favours him, imputes its expulsion to resentment, because it "so much exposed the keeping part of the town"

Oedipus (1679) is a tragedy formed by Dryden and Lee, in conjunction, from the works
of

of Sophocles, Seneca, and Corneille. Dryden planned the scenes, and composed the first and third acts.

Don Sebastian (1690) is commonly esteemed either the first or second of his dramatick performances. It is too long to be all acted, and has many characters and many incidents; and though it is not without fallies of frantick dignity, and more noise than meaning, yet as it makes approaches to the possibilities of real life, and has some sentiments which leave a strong impression, it continued long to attract attention. Amidst the distresses of princes, and the vicissitudes of empire, are inserted several scenes which the writer intended for comick; but which, I suppose, that age did not much commend, and this would not endure. There are, however, passages of excellence universally acknowledged; the dispute and the reconciliation of Dorax and Sebastian has always been admired.

This play was first acted in 1690, after Dryden had for some years discontinued dramatick poetry.

Amphitryon is a comedy derived from Plautus and Moliere. The dedication is dated Oct.

1690. This play seems to have succeeded at its first appearance; and was, I think, long considered as a very diverting entertainment.

Cleomenes (1692) is a tragedy, only remarkable as it occasioned an incident related in the *Guardian*, and allusively mentioned by Dryden in his preface. As he came out from the representation, he was accosted thus by some airy stripling: "Had I been left alone with a young beauty, I would not have spent my time like your Spartan." "That, Sir," said Dryden, "perhaps is true; but give me leave to tell you, that you are no hero."

King Arthur (1691) is another opera. It was the last work that Dryden performed for King Charles, who did not live to see it exhibited, and it does not seem to have been ever brought upon the stage*. In the dedication to the marquis of Halifax, there is a very elegant character of Charles, and a pleasing account of his latter life. When this was first brought upon the stage, news that the duke of Monmouth had landed was told in the theatre; upon which the company departed, and *Arthur* was exhibited no more.

* This is a mistake. It was set to music by Purcell, and well received, and is yet a favourite entertainment. H.

His last drama was *Love Triumphant*, a tragedy-comedy. In his dedication to the earl of Salisbury he mentions "the lowness of fortune to which he has so voluntarily reduced himself, and of which he has no reason to be ashamed."

This play appeared in 1694. It is said to have been unsuccessful. The catastrophe, proceeding merely from a change of mind, is confessed by the author to be defective. Thus he began and ended his dramatick labours with ill success.

From such a number of theatrical pieces it will be supposed, by most readers, that he must have improved his fortune; at least, that such diligence with such abilities must have set penury at defiance. But in Dryden's time the drama was very far from that universal approbation which it has now obtained. The playhouse was abhorred by the Puritans, and avoided by those who desired the character of seriousness or decency. A grave lawyer would have debased his dignity, and a young trader would have impaired his credit, by appearing in those mansions of dissolute licentiousness. The profits of the theatre, when so many classes of the people were deducted from the

audience, were not great; and the poet had for a long time but a single night. The first that had two nights was *Southern*; and the first that had three was *Rowe*. There were, however, in those days, arts of improving a poet's profit, which Dryden forbore to practise; and a play therefore seldom produced him more than a hundred pounds, by the accumulated gain of the third night, the dedication, and the copy.

Almost every piece had a dedication, written with such elegance and luxuriance of praise, as neither haughtiness nor avarice could be imagined able to resist. But he seems to have made flattery too cheap. That praise is worth nothing of which the price is known.

To increase the value of his copies, he often accompanied his work with a preface of criticism; a kind of learning then almost new in the English language, and which he, who had considered with great accuracy the principles of writing, was able to distribute copiously, as occasions arose. By these dissertations the public judgment must have been much improved; and Swift, who conversed with Dryden, relates that he regretted the success of his own
in-

instructions, and found his readers made suddenly too skilful to be easily satisfied.

His prologues had such reputation, that for some time a play was considered as less likely to be well received, if some of his verses did not introduce it. The price of a prologue was two guineas, till, being asked to write one for Mr. Southern, he demanded three; "Not," said he, "young man, out of disrespect to you, but the players have had my goods too cheap."

Though he declares, that in his own opinion his genius was not dramatick, he had great confidence in his own fertility; for he is said to have engaged, by contract, to furnish four plays a year.

It is certain that in one year, 1678*, he published *All for Love*, *Assignment*, two parts of the *Conquest of Granada*, *Sir Martin Marr-all*, and the *State of Innocence*, six complete plays; with a celerity of performance, which, though all Langbaine's charges of plagiarism should be allowed, shews such facility of composition,

* Dr. Johnson in this assertion was misled by Langbaine. Only one of these plays appeared in 1678. Nor were there more than three in any one year. The dates are now added from the original editions. E.

such readinefs of language, and fuch copioufnefs of fentiment, as, fince the time of Lopez de Vega, perhaps no other author has ever poffeffed.

He did not enjoy his reputation, however great, nor his profits, however fmall, without moleftation. He had criticks to endure, and rivals to oppofe. The two moft diftinguifhed wits of the nobility, the duke of Buckingham and earl of Rochefter, declared themfelves his enemies.

Buckingham characterifed him in, 1671, by the name of *Bayes* in the *Rehearfal*; a farce which he is faid to have written with the affiftance of Butler the author of *Hudibras*, Martin Clifford of the Charterhoufe, and Dr. Sprat, the friend of Cowley, then his chaplain. Dryden and his friends laughed at the length of time, and the number of hands employed upon this performance; in which, though by fome artifice of action it yet keeps poffeffion of the ftage, it is not poffible now to find any thing that might not have been written without fo long delay, or a confederacy fo numerous.

To adjust the minute events of literary hiftory, is tedious and troublefome; it requires in-

indeed no great force of understanding, but often depends upon enquiries which there is no opportunity of making, or is to be fetched from books and pamphlets not always at hand.

The *Rehearsal* was played in 1671*, and yet is represented as ridiculing passages in the *Conquest of Granada*† and *Assignation*, which were not published till 1678, in *Marriage A-la-mode* published in 1673, and in *Tyrannick Love* of 1677. These contradictions shew how rashly satire is applied.

It is said that this farce was originally intended against Davenant, who in the first draught was characterised by the name of *Bilboa*. Davenant had been a soldier and an adventurer.

There is one passage in the *Rehearsal* still remaining, which seems to have related originally to Davenant. *Bayes* hurts his nose, and comes in with brown paper applied to the bruise; how this affected Dryden, does not

* It was published in 1672. E.

† *The Conquest of Granada* was published in 1672, *The Assignation* in 1673, *Marriage A-la-mode* in the same year, and *Tyrannick Love* in 1672. E.

appear.

appear. Davenant's nose had suffered such diminution by mishaps among the women, that a patch upon that part evidently denoted him.

It is said likewise that Sir Robert Howard was once meant. The design was probably to ridicule the reigning poet, whoever he might be.

Much of the personal satire, to which it might owe its first reception, is now lost or obscured. *Bayes* probably imitated the dress, and mimicked the manner, of Dryden; the cant words which are so often in his mouth may be supposed to have been Dryden's habitual phrases, or customary exclamations. *Bayes*, when he is to write, is blooded and purged: this, as Lamotte relates himself to have heard, was the real practice of the poet.

There were other strokes in the *Rehearsal* by which malice was gratified; the debate between Love and Honour, which keeps prince *Volscius* in a single boot, is said to have alluded to the misconduct of the duke of Ormond, who lost Dublin to the rebels while he was toying with a mistress.

The earl of Rochester, to suppress the reputation of Dryden, took Settle into his protection, and endeavoured to persuade the publick
that

that its approbation had been to that time misplaced. Settle was a while in high reputation, his *Empress of Morocco*, having first delighted the town, was carried in triumph to Whitehall, and played by the ladies of the court. Now was the poetical meteor at the highest; the next moment began its fall. Rochester withdrew his patronage; seeming resolved, says one of his biographers, "to have a judgement contrary to that of the town." Perhaps being unable to endure any reputation beyond a certain height, even when he had himself contributed to raise it.

Neither criticks nor rivals did Dryden much mischief, unless they gained from his own temper the power of vexing him, which his frequent bursts of resentment give reason to suspect. He is always angry at some past, or afraid of some future censure; but he lessens the smarts of his wounds by the balm of his own approbation, and endeavours to repel the shafts of criticism by opposing a shield of adamant confidence.

The perpetual accusation produced against him, was that of plagiarism, against which he never attempted any vigorous defence; for,
though

though he was perhaps sometimes injuriously censured, he would, by denying part of the charge, have confessed the rest; and as his adversaries had the proof in their own hands, he, who knew that wit had little power against facts, wisely left, in that perplexity which generally produces, a question which it was his interest to suppress, and which, unless provoked by vindication, few were likely to examine.

Though the life of a writer, from about thirty-five to sixty-three, may be supposed to have been sufficiently busied by the composition of eight and twenty pieces for the stage, Dryden found room in the same space for many other undertakings.

But, how much soever he wrote, he was at least once suspected of writing more; for in 1679 a paper of verses, called *an Essay on Satire*, was shewn about in manuscript, by which the earl of Rochester, the duchess of Portsmouth, and others, were so much provoked, that, as was supposed (for the actors were never discovered), they procured Dryden, whom they suspected as the author, to be waylaid and beaten. This incident is mentioned by the duke of Buckinghamshire, the true writer,
in

in his Art of Poetry; where he says of Dryden,

Though prais'd and beaten for another's rhymes,
His own deserve as great applause sometimes.

His reputation in time was such, that his name was thought necessary to the success of every poetical or literary performance, and therefore he was engaged to contribute something, whatever it might be, to many publications. He prefixed the Life of Polybius to the translation of Sir Henry Sheers; and those of Lucian and Plutarch to versions of their works by different hands. Of the English Tacitus he translated the first book; and, if Gordon be credited, translated it from the French. Such a charge can hardly be mentioned without some degree of indignation; but it is not, I suppose, so much to be inferred, that Dryden wanted the literature necessary to the perusal of Tacitus, as that, considering himself as hidden in a crowd, he had no awe of the publick; and, writing merely for money, was contented to get it by the nearest way.

In 1680, the Epistles of Ovid being translated by the poets of the time, among which
one

one was the work of Dryden, and another of Dryden and Lord Mulgrave, it was necessary to introduce them by a preface; and Dryden, who on such occasions was regularly summoned, prefixed a discourse upon translation, which was then struggling for the liberty that it now enjoys. Why it should find any difficulty in breaking the shackles of verbal interpretation, which must for ever debar it from elegance, it would be difficult to conjecture, were not the power of prejudice every day observed. The authority of Jonson, Sandys, and Holiday, had fixed the judgement of the nation; and it was not easily believed that a better way could be found than they had taken, though Fanshawe, Denham, Waller, and Cowley, had tried to give examples of a different practice.

In 1681, Dryden became yet more conspicuous by uniting politics with poetry, in the memorable satire called *Absalom and Achitophel*, written against the faction which, by Lord Shaftesbury's incitement, set the duke of Monmouth at its head.

Of this poem, in which personal satire was applied to the support of public principles,
and

and in which therefore every mind was interested, the reception was eager, and the sale so large, that my father, an old bookseller, told me, he had not known it equalled but by *Sacheverell's* trial.

The reason of this general perusal Addison has attempted to derive from the delight which the mind feels in the investigation of secrets; and thinks that curiosity to decypher the names procured readers to the poem. There is no need to enquire why those verses were read, which, to all the attractions of wit, elegance, and harmony, added the co-operation of all the factious passions, and filled every mind with triumph or resentment.

It could not be supposed that all the provocation given by Dryden would be endured without resistance or reply. Both his person and his party were exposed in their turns to the shafts of satire, which, though neither so well pointed nor perhaps so well aimed, undoubtedly drew blood,

One of these poems is called *Dryden's Satire on his Muse*; ascribed, though, as Pope says, falsely, to *Sommers*, who was afterwards Chancellor. The poem, whose soever it was, has
much

much virulence, and some spritelinefs. The writer tells all the ill that he can collect both of Dryden and his friends.

The poem of *Abfalom and Achitophel* had two answers, now both forgotten; one called *Azaria and Hufbai*; the other *Abfalom senior*. Of these hostile compositions, Dryden apparently imputes *Abfalom senior* to Settle, by quoting in his verses against him the second line. *Azaria and Hufbai* was, as *Wood* fays, imputed to him, though it is fomewhat unlikely that he fhould write twice on the fame occasion. This is a difficulty which I cannot remove, for want of a minuter knowledge of poetical tranfactions.

The fame year he published the *Medal*, of which the fubject is a medal ftruck on lord Shaftesbury's efcape from a profecution, by the *ignoramus* of a grand jury of Londoners.

In both poems he maintains the fame principles, and faw them both attacked by the fame antagonist. Elkanah Settle, who had answered *Abfalom*, appeared with equal courage in opposition to the *Medal*, and published an answer called *The Medal reverjed*, with fo much fuccefs in both encounters, that he left the
palm

palm doubtful, and divided the suffrages of the nation. Such are the revolutions of fame, or such is the prevalence of fashion, that the man whose works have not yet been thought to deserve the care of collecting them, who died forgotten in an hospital, and whose latter years were spent in contriving shows for fairs, and carrying an elegy or epithalamium, of which the beginning and end were occasionally varied, but the intermediate parts were always the same, to every house where there was a funeral or a wedding, might with truth have had inscribed upon his stone,

Here lies the Rival and Antagonist of Dryden.

Settle was, for his rebellion, severely chastised by Dryden under the name of *Doeg*, in the second part of *Absalom and Achitophel*, and was perhaps for his factious audacity made the city poet, whose annual office was to describe the glories of the Mayor's day. Of these bards he was the last, and seems not much to have deserved even this degree of regard, if it was paid to his political opinions; for he afterwards wrote a panegyrick on the virtues of judge Jefferies; and what more could have

VOL. II. N been

been done by the meanest zealot for prerogative?

Of translated fragments, or occasional poems, to enumerate the titles, or settle the dates, would be tedious, with little use. It may be observed, that as Dryden's genius was commonly excited by some personal regard, he rarely writes upon a general topick.

Soon after the accession of king James, when the design of reconciling the nation to the church of Rome became apparent, and the religion of the court gave the only efficacious title to its favours, Dryden declared himself a convert to popery. This at any other time might have passed with little censure. Sir *Kenelm Digby* embraced popery; the two *Reynolds* reciprocally converted one another*; and *Chillingworth* himself was a while so entangled in the wilds of controversy, as to retire for quiet to an infallible church. If men of argument and study can find such difficulties or such motives, as may either unite them to

* Dr. John Reynolds, who lived temp. Jac. I was at first a zealous Papist, and his brother William as earnest a Protestant, but by mutual disputation each converted the other. Vide Fuller's Church History, p. 47. book X. H.

the church of Rome, or detain them in uncertainty, there can be no wonder that a man, who perhaps never enquired why he was a Protestant, should by an artful and experienced disputant be made a Papist, overborn by the sudden violence of new and unexpected arguments, or deceived by a representation which shews only the doubts on one part, and only the evidence on the other.

That conversion will always be suspected that apparently concurs with interest. He, that never finds his error till it hinders his progress towards wealth or honour, will not be thought to love Truth only for herself. Yet it may easily happen that information may come at a commodious time; and, as truth and interest are not by any fatal necessity at variance, that one may by accident introduce the other. When opinions are struggling into popularity, the arguments by which they are opposed or defended become more known; and he that changes his profession would perhaps have changed it before, with the like opportunities of instruction. This was the then state of Popery; every artifice was used to shew it in its fairest form; and it must be owned to be a

religion of external appearance sufficiently attractive.

It is natural to hope that a comprehensive is likewise an elevated soul, and that whoever is wise is also honest. I am willing to believe that Dryden, having employed his mind, active as it was, upon different studies, and filled it, capacious as it was, with other materials, came unprovided to the controversy, and wanted rather skill to discover the right than virtue to maintain it. But enquiries into the heart are not for man; we must now leave him to his Judge.

The priests, having strengthened their cause by so powerful an adherent, were not long before they brought him into action. They engaged him to defend the controversial papers found in the strong-box of Charles the Second, and, what yet was harder, to defend them against Stillingfleet.

With hopes of promoting Popery, he was employed to translate Maimbourg's History of the League; which he published with a large introduction. His name is likewise prefixed to the English Life of Francis Xavier; but I know not that he ever owned himself the translator.

translator. Perhaps the use of his name was a pious fraud, which however seems not to have had much effect; for neither of the books, I believe, was ever popular.

The version of Xavier's Life is commended by Brown, in a pamphlet not written to flatter; and the occasion of it is said to have been, that the Queen, when she solicited a son, made vows to him as her tutelary saint.

He was supposed to have undertaken to translate *Varillas's History of Heresies*; and, when Burnet published remarks upon it, to have written an *Answer*; upon which Burnet makes the following observation:

“ I have been informed from England, that
“ a gentleman, who is famous both for poetry
“ and several other things, had spent three
“ months in translating M. Varillas's History;
“ but that, as soon as my Reflections ap-
“ peared, he discontinued his labour, finding
“ the credit of his author was gone. Now, if
“ he thinks it is recovered by his Answer, he
“ will perhaps go on with his translation; and
“ this may be, for aught I know, as good an
“ entertainment for him as the conversation
“ that he had set on between the Hinds and

“ Panthers, and all the rest of animals, for
“ whom M. Varillas may serve well enough as
“ an author: and this history and that poem
“ are such extraordinary things of their kind,
“ that it will be but suitable to see the author
“ of the worst poem become likewise the trans-
“ lator of the worst history that the age has
“ produced. If his grace and his wit improve
“ both proportionably, he will hardly find
“ that he has gained much by the change he
“ has made, from having no religion to chuse
“ one of the worst. It is true, he had some-
“ what to sink from in matter of wit; but, as
“ for his morals, it is scarce possible for him
“ to grow a worse man than he was. He has
“ lately wreaked his malice on me for spoiling
“ his three months labour; but in it he has
“ done me all the honour that any man can
“ receive from him, which is to be railed at
“ by him. If I had ill-nature enough to
“ prompt me to wish a very bad wish for
“ him, it should be, that he would go on and
“ finish his translation. By that it will appear,
“ whether the English nation, which is the
“ most competent judge in this matter, has,
“ upon the seeing our debate, pronounced in
“ M.

“ M. Varillas’s favour, or in mine. It is
“ true, Mr. D. will suffer a little by it; but
“ at least it will serve to keep him in from
“ other extravagancies; and if he gains little
“ honour by this work, yet he cannot lose so
“ much by it as he has done by his last em-
“ ployment.”

Having probably felt his own inferiority in theological controversy, he was desirous of trying whether, by bringing poetry to aid his arguments, he might become a more efficacious defender of his new profession. To reason in verse was, indeed, one of his powers; but subtilty and harmony united are still feeble, when opposed to truth.

Actuated therefore by zeal for Rome or hope of fame, he published the *Hind and Panther*, a poem in which the church of Rome, figured by the *milk-white Hind*, defends her tenets against the church of England, represented by the *Panther*, a beast beautiful, but spotted.

A fable which exhibits two beasts talking Theology, appears at once full of absurdity; and it was accordingly ridiculed in the *City Mouse* and *Country Mouse*, a parody, written

by Montague, afterwards earl of Halifax, and Prior, who then gave the first specimen of his abilities.

The conversion of such a man, at such a time, was not likely to pass uncensured. Three dialogues were published by the facetious Thomas Brown, of which the two first were called *Reasons of Mr. Bayes's changing his religion*: and the third, *the Reasons of Mr. Hains the player's conversion and re-conversion*. The first was printed in 1688, the second not till 1690, the third in 1691. The clamour seems to have been long continued, and the subject to have strongly fixed the publick attention.

In the two first dialogues Bayes is brought into the company of Crites and Eugenius, with whom he had formerly debated on dramattick poetry. The two talkers in the third are Mr. Bayes and Mr. Hains.

Brown was a man not deficient in literature, nor destitute of fancy; but he seems to have thought it the pinnacle of excellence to be a *merry fellow*; and therefore laid out his powers upon small jests or gross buffoonery, so that his performances have little intrinsic value, and were read only while they were recommended

mended by the novelty of the event that occasioned them.

These dialogues are like his other works: what sense or knowledge they contain is disgraced by the garb in which it is exhibited. One great source of pleasure is to call Dryden *little Bayes*. Ajax, who happens to be mentioned, is "he that wore as many cow-hides upon his shield as would have furnished half the king's army with shoe-leather."

Being asked whether he has seen the *Hind and Panther*, Crites answers: "Seen it! Mr. Bayes, why I can stir no where but it pursues me; it haunts me worse than a pewter-buttoned serjeant does a decayed cit. Sometimes I meet it in a band-box, when my laundry brings home my linen: sometimes, whether I will or no, it lights my pipe at a coffee-house; sometimes it surprises me in a trunk-maker's shop; and sometimes it refreshes my memory for me on the backside of a Chancery-lane parcel. For your comfort too, Mr. Bayes, I have not only seen it, as you may perceive, but have read it too, and can quote it as freely upon occasion as a frugal tradesman can quote that noble treatise the *Worth of a Penny*
" to

“to his extravagant ’prentice, that revels in
“stewed apples, and penny custards.”

The whole animation of these compositions arises from a profusion of ludicrous and affected comparisons. “To secure one’s chastity,” says Bayes, “little more is necessary than to leave off a correspondence with the other sex, which, to a wise man, is no greater a punishment than it would be to a fanatic parson to be forbid *seeing* the *Cheats* and the *Committee*; or for my Lord Mayor and Aldermen to be interdicted the sight of the *London Cuckolds*.” This is the general strain, and therefore I shall be easily excused the labour of more transcription.

Brown does not wholly forget past transactions: “You began,” says Crites to Bayes, “a very indifferent religion, and have not mended the matter in your last choice. It was but reason that your Muse, which appeared first in a Tyrant’s quarrel, should employ her last efforts to justify the usurpations of the *Hind*.”

Next year the nation was summoned to celebrate the birth of the Prince. Now was the time for Dryden to rouse his imagination,
and

and strain his voice. Happy days were at hand, and he was willing to enjoy and diffuse the anticipated blessings. He published a poem, filled with predictions of greatness and prosperity! predictions, of which it is not necessary to tell how they have been verified.

A few months passed after these joyful notes, and every blossom of popish hope was blasted for ever by the Revolution. A Papist now could be no longer Laureat. The revenue, which he had enjoyed with so much pride and praise, was transferred to Shadwell, an old enemy, whom he had formerly stigmatised by the name of *Og*. Dryden could not decently complain that he was deposed; but seemed very angry that Shadwell succeeded him, and has therefore celebrated the intruder's inauguration in a poem exquisitely satirical, called *Mac Flecknoe*; of which the *Dunciad*, as Pope himself declares, is an imitation, though more extended in its plan, and more diversified in its incidents.

It is related by Prior, that Lord Dorset, when, as chamberlain, he was constrained to eject Dryden from his office, gave him from his own purse an allowance equal to the salary.

This

This is no romantick or incredible act of generosity; an hundred a year is often enough given to claims less cogent, by men less famed for liberality. Yet Dryden always represented himself as suffering under a public infliction; and once particularly demands respect for the patience with which he endured the loss of his little fortune. His patron might, indeed, enjoin him to suppress his bounty; but if he suffered nothing, he should not have complained.

During the short reign of king James he had written nothing for the stage*, being, in his opinion, more profitably employed in controversy and flattery. Of praise he might perhaps have been less lavish without inconvenience, for James was never said to have much regard for poetry: he was to be flattered only by adopting his religion.

Times were now changed: Dryden was no longer the court-poet, and was to look back for support to his former trade; and having waited about two years, either considering himself as discountenanced by the publick, or per-

* Albion and Albianus must however be excepted. E.

haps expecting a second Revolution, he produced *Don Sebastian* in 1690; and in the next four years four dramas more.

In 1693 appeared a new version of Juvenal and Persius. Of Juvenal he translated the first, third, sixth, tenth, and sixteenth satires; and of Persius the whole work. On this occasion he introduced his two sons to the publick, as nurselings of the Muses. The fourteenth of Juvenal was the work of John, and the seventh of Charles Dryden. He prefixed a very ample preface in the form of a dedication to lord Dorset; and there gives an account of the design which he had once formed to write an epic poem on the actions either of Arthur or the Black Prince. He considered the epick as necessarily including some kind of supernatural agency, and had imagined a new kind of contest between the guardian angels of kingdoms, of whom he conceived that each might be represented zealous for his charge, without any intended opposition to the purposes of the Supreme Being, of which all created minds must in part be ignorant.

This is the most reasonable scheme of celestial interposition that ever was formed. The
surprizes

surprizes and terrors of enchantments, which have succeeded to the intrigues and oppositions of pagan deities, afford very striking scenes, and open a vast extent to the imagination; but, as Boileau observes, and Boileau will be seldom found mistaken, with this incurable defect, that in a contest between heaven and hell we know at the beginning which is to prevail; for this reason we follow Rinaldo to the enchanted wood with more curiosity than terror.

In the scheme of Dryden there is one great difficulty, which yet he would perhaps have had address enough to surmount. In a war justice can be but on one side; and, to entitle the hero to the protection of angels, he must fight in defence of indubitable right. Yet some of the celestial beings, thus opposed to each other, must have been represented as defending guilt.

That this poem was never written, is reasonably to be lamented. It would doubtless have improved our numbers, and enlarged our language, and might perhaps have contributed by pleasing instruction to rectify our opinions, and purify our manners.

What

What he required as the indispensable condition of such an undertaking, a publick stipend, was not likely in these times to be obtained. Riches were not become familiar to us, nor had the nation yet learned to be liberal.

This plan he charged Blackmore with stealing; only says he, "The guardian angels of kingdoms were machines too ponderous for him to manage."

In 1694, he began the most laborious and difficult of all his works, the translation of Virgil; from which he borrowed two months, that he might turn Fresnoy's Art of Painting into English prose. The preface, which he boasts to have written in twelve mornings, exhibits a parallel of poetry and painting, with a miscellaneous collection of critical remarks, such as cost a mind stored like his no labour to produce them.

In 1697, he published his version of the works of Virgil; and, that no opportunity of profit might be lost, dedicated the Pastorals to the lord Clifford, the Georgics to the earl of Chesterfield, and the *Æneid* to the earl of Mulgrave. This œconomy of flattery, at once
lavish

lavish and discreet, did not pass without observation.

This translation was censured by Milbourne, a clergyman, styled by Pope "the fairest of criticks," because he exhibited his own version to be compared with that which he condemned.

His last work was his Fables, published in consequence, as is supposed, of a contract now in the hands of Mr. Tonson; by which he obliged himself, in consideration of three hundred pounds, to finish for the press ten thousand verses.

In this volume is comprised the well-known ode on St. Cecilia's day, which, as appeared by a letter communicated to Dr. Birch, he spent a fortnight in composing and correcting. But what is this to the patience and diligence of Boileau, whose *Equivoque*, a poem of only three hundred forty-six lines, took from his life eleven months to write it, and three years to revise it!

Part of this book of Fables is the first Iliad in English, intended as a specimen of a version of the whole. Considering into what hands

Homer

Homer was to fall, the reader cannot but rejoice that this project went no further.

The time was now at hand which was to put an end to all his schemes and labours. On the first of May 1701, having been some time, as he tells us, a cripple in his limbs, he died in Gerard-street, of a mortification in his leg.

There is extant a wild story relating to some vexatious events that happened at his funeral, which, at the end of Congreve's Life, by a writer of I know not what credit, are thus related, as I find the account transferred to a biographical dictionary:

“ Mr. Dryden dying on the Wednesday
“ morning, Dr. Thomas Sprat, then bishop
“ of Rochester and dean of Westminster, sent
“ the next day to the lady Elizabeth Howard,
“ Mr. Dryden's widow, that he would make
“ a present of the ground, which was forty
“ pounds, with all the other Abbey-fees. The
“ lord Halifax likewise sent to the lady Eliza-
“ beth, and Mr. Charles Dryden her son, that,
“ if they would give him leave to bury Mr.
“ Dryden, he would inter him with a gentle-
“ man's private funeral, and afterwards bestow

“ five hundred pounds on a monument in the
“ Abbey ; which, as they had no reason to re-
“ fuse, they accepted. On the Saturday fol-
“ lowing the company came ; the corpse was
“ put into a velvet hearse, and eighteen mourn-
“ ing coaches, filled with company, attended.
“ When they were just ready to move, the
“ lord Jefferies, son of the lord chancellor Jef-
“ feries, with some of his rakish companions
“ coming by, asked whose funeral it was : and
“ being told Mr. Dryden’s, he said, ‘ What,
“ shall Dryden, the greatest honour and orna-
“ ment of the nation, be buried after this pri-
“ vate manner ! No, gentlemen, let all that
“ loved Mr. Dryden, and honour his memory,
“ alight and join with me in gaining my lady’s
“ consent to let me have the honour of his in-
“ terment, which shall be after another manner
“ than this ; and I will bestow a thousand
“ pounds on a monument in the Abbey for
“ him.’ The gentlemen in the coaches, not
“ knowing of the bishop of Rochester’s favour,
“ nor of the lord Halifax’s generous design
“ (they both having, out of respect to the fa-
“ mily, enjoined the lady Elizabeth and her
“ son to keep their favour concealed to the
“ world.

“ world, and let it pass for their own expence),
“ readily came out of the coaches, and attended
“ lord Jefferies up to the lady’s bedside, who
“ was then sick. He repeated the purport of
“ what he had before said; but she absolutely
“ refusing, he fell on his knees, vowing never
“ to rise till his request was granted. The rest
“ of the company by his desire kneeled also;
“ and the lady, being under a sudden surprize,
“ fainted away. As soon as she recovered her
“ speech, she cried, *No, no*. Enough, gentle-
“ men, replied he; my lady is very good, she
“ says, *Go, go*. She repeated her former
“ words with all her strength, but in vain,
“ for her feeble voice was lost in their acclama-
“ tions of joy; and the lord Jefferies ordered
“ the hearfemen to carry the corpse to Mr.
“ Ruffel’s, an undertaker in Cheapside, and
“ leave it there till he should send orders for
“ the embalment, which, he added, should be
“ after the royal manner. His directions were
“ obeyed, the company dispersed, and lady
“ Elizabeth and her son remained inconsol-
“ able. The next day Mr. Charles Dryden
“ waited on the lord Halifax and the bishop,
“ to excuse his mother and himself, by relat-

“ing the real truth. But neither his lordship
“nor the bishop would admit of any plea;
“especially the latter, who had the Abbey
“lighted, the ground opened, the choir at-
“tending, an anthem ready set, and himself
“waiting for some time without any corpse
“to bury. The undertaker, after three days
“expectance of orders for embalment without
“receiving any, waited on the lord Jefferies;
“who pretending ignorance of the matter,
“turned it off with an illnatured jest, saying,
“that those who observed the orders of a
“drunken frolick deserved no better; that he
“remembered nothing at all of it; and that he
“might do what he pleased with the corpse.
“Upon this, the undertaker waited upon the
“lady Elizabeth and her son, and threatened
“to bring the corpse home, and set it before
“the door. They desired a day’s respite,
“which was granted. Mr. Charles Dryden
“wrote a handsome letter to the lord Jefferies,
“who returned it with this cool answer, ‘That
“he knew nothing of the matter, and would
“be troubled no more about it.’ He then ad-
“dressed the lord Halifax and the bishop of
“Rochester, who absolutely refused to do any
“thing

“ thing in it. In this distress Dr. Garth sent
“ for the corpse to the College of Physicians;
“ and proposed a funeral by subscription, to
“ which himself set a most noble example.
“ At last a day, about three weeks after Mr.
“ Dryden’s decease, was appointed for the in-
“ terment. Dr. Garth pronounced a fine Latin
“ oration, at the College, over the corpse;
“ which was attended to the Abbey by a nu-
“ merous train of coaches. When the funeral
“ was over, Mr. Charles Dryden sent a chal-
“ lenge to the lord Jefferies, who refusing to
“ answer it, he sent several others, and went
“ often himself; but could neither get a letter
“ delivered, nor admittance to speak to him;
“ which so incensed him, that he resolved,
“ since his lordship refused to answer him like
“ a gentleman, that he would watch an op-
“ portunity to meet, and fight off-hand,
“ though with all the rules of honour; which
“ his lordship hearing, left the town: and Mr.
“ Charles Dryden could never have the satis-
“ faction of meeting him, though he sought
“ it till his death with the utmost applica-
“ tion.”

This story I once intended to omit, as it appears with no great evidence; nor have I met with any confirmation, but in a letter of Farquhar; and he only relates that the funeral of Dryden was tumultuary and confused*.

Supposing the story true, we may remark, that the gradual change of manners, though imperceptible in the process, appears great when different times, and those not very distant, are compared. If at this time a young drunken Lord should interrupt the pompous regularity of a magnificent funeral, what would be the event, but that he would be jostled out

* An earlier account of Dryden's funeral than that above cited, though without the circumstances that preceded it, is given by Edward Ward, who in his *London Spy*, published in 1706, relates, that on the occasion there was a performance of solemn Music at the College, and that at the procession which himself saw, standing at the end of Chancery-lane, Fleet-street, there was a concert of hautboys and trumpets. The day of Dryden's interment, he says, was Monday the 13th of May, which, according to Johnson, was twelve days after his decease, and shews how long his funeral was in suspense. Ward knew not that the expence of it was defrayed by subscription; but compliments lord Jefferies for so pious an undertaking. He also says, that the cause of Dryden's death was an inflammation in his toe, occasioned by the flesh growing over the nail; which being neglected, produced a mortification in his leg. H.
of

of the way, and compelled to be quiet? If he should thrust himself into a house, he would be sent roughly away; and, what is yet more to the honour of the present time, I believe that those, who had subscribed to the funeral of a man like Dryden, would not, for such an accident, have withdrawn their contributions*.

He was buried among the poets in Westminster Abbey, where, though the duke of Newcastle had, in a general dedication prefixed by Congreve to his dramattick works, accepted thanks for his intention of erecting him a monument, he lay long without distinction, till the duke of Buckinghamshire gave him a tablet, inscribed only with the name of DRYDEN.

* In the Register of the College of Physicians, is the following Entry: "May 3, 1700. Comitibus Censoribus ordinariis. At the request of several persons of quality, that Mr. Dryden might be carried from the College of Physicians to be interred at Westminster, it was unanimously granted by the President and Censors."

This Entry is not calculated to afford any credit to the narrative concerning Lord Jefferies. E.

He married the lady Elizabeth Howard, daughter of the earl of Berkshire, with circumstances, according to the satire imputed to lord Sommers, not very honourable to either party: by her he had three sons, Charles, John, and Henry. Charles was usher of the palace to pope Clement the XIth; and, visiting England in 1704, was drowned in an attempt to swim across the Thames at Windsor.

John was author of a comedy called *The Husband his own Cuckold*. He is said to have died at Rome. Henry entered into some religious order. It is some proof of Dryden's sincerity in his second religion, that he taught it to his sons. A man, conscious of hypocritical profession in himself, is not likely to convert others; and as his sons were qualified in 1693 to appear among the translators of Juvenal, they must have been taught some religion before their father's change.

Of the person of Dryden I know not any account; of his mind, the portrait which has been left by Congreve, who knew him with great familiarity, is such as adds our love of his manners to our admiration of his genius. "He was," we are told, "of a nature exceedingly

“ceedingly humane and compassionate, ready
“to forgive injuries, and capable of a sincere
“reconciliation with those that had offended
“him. His friendship, where he professed it,
“went beyond his professions. He was of a
“very easy, of very pleasing access; but some-
“what slow, and, as it were, diffident in his
“advances to others: he had that in his na-
“ture which abhorred intrusion into any so-
“ciety whatever. He was therefore less known,
“and consequently his character became more
“liable to misapprehensions and misrepresenta-
“tions: he was very modest, and very easily
“to be discountenanced in his approaches to
“his equals or superiors. As his reading had
“been very extensive, so was he very happy
“in a memory tenacious of every thing that
“he had read. He was not more possessed of
“knowledge than he was communicative of
“it; but then his communication was by no
“means pedantick, or imposed upon the con-
“versation, but just such, and went so far as,
“by the natural turn of the conversation in
“which he was engaged, it was necessarily
“promoted or required. He was extremely
“ready, and gentle in his correction of the
“errors

“ errors of any writer who thought fit to con-
“ sult him, and full as ready and patient to
“ admit the reprehensions of others, in respect
“ of his own oversights or mistakes.”

To this account of Congreve nothing can be objected but the fondness of friendship; and to have excited that fondness in such a mind is no small degree of praise. The disposition of Dryden, however, is shewn in this character rather as it exhibited itself in cursory conversation, than as it operated on the more important parts of life. His placability and his friendship indeed were solid virtues; but courtesy and good humour are often found with little real worth. Since Congreve, who knew him well, has told us no more, the rest must be collected as it can from other testimonies, and particularly from those notices which Dryden has very liberally given us of himself.

The modesty which made him so slow to advance, and so easy to be repulsed, was certainly no suspicion of deficient merit, or unconsciousness of his own value: he appears to have known, in its whole extent, the dignity of his own character, and to have set a very high value on his own powers and performances.

mances. He probably did not offer his conversation, because he expected it to be solicited; and he retired from a cold reception, not submissive but indignant, with such reverence of of his own greatness as made him unwilling to expose it to neglect or violation.

His modesty was by no means inconsistent with ostentatiousness; he is diligent enough to remind the world of his merit, and expresses with very little scruple his high opinion of his own powers; but his self-commendations are read without scorn or indignation; we allow his claims, and love his frankness.

Tradition, however, has not allowed that his confidence in himself exempted him from jealousy of others. He is accused of envy and insidiousness; and is particularly charged with inciting Creech to translate Horace, that he might lose the reputation which Lucretius had given him.

Of this charge we immediately discover that it is merely conjectural; the purpose was such as no man would confess; and a crime that admits no proof, why should we believe?

He has been described as magisterially presiding over the younger writers, and assuming the

the distribution of poetical fame; but he who excels has a right to teach, and he whose judgement is incontestable may without usurpation examine and decide.

Congreve represents him as ready to advise and instruct; but there is reason to believe that his communication was rather useful than entertaining. He declares of himself that he was saturnine, and not one of those whose spritely sayings diverted company; and one of his censurers makes him say,

Nor wine nor love could ever see me gay;
To writing bred, I knew not what to say.

There are men whose powers operate only at leisure and in retirement, and whose intellectual vigour deserts them in conversation; whom merriment confuses, and objection disconcerts; whose bashfulness restrains their exertion, and suffers them not to speak till the time of speaking is past; or whose attention to their own character makes them unwilling to utter at hazard what has not been considered, and cannot be recalled.

Of Dryden's sluggishness in conversation it is vain to search or to guess the cause. He
cer-

certainly wanted neither sentiments nor language; his intellectual treasures were great, though they were locked up from his own use. "His thoughts," when he wrote, "flowed in upon him so fast, that his only care was which to chuse, and which to reject." Such rapidity of composition naturally promises a flow of talk, yet we must be content to believe what an enemy says of him, when he likewise says it of himself. But whatever was his character as a companion, it appears that he lived in familiarity with the highest persons of his time. It is related by Carte of the duke of Ormond, that he used often to pass a night with Dryden, and those with whom Dryden consoorted: who they were, Carte has not told; but certainly the convivial table at which Ormond sat was not surrounded with a plebeian society. He was indeed reproached with boasting of his familiarity with the great; and Horace will support him in the opinion, that to please superiours is not the lowest kind of merit.

The merit of pleasing must, however, be estimated by the means. Favour is not always gained by good actions or laudable qualities.

Caresses

Careffes and preferments are often bestowed on the auxiliaries of vice, the procurers of pleasure, or the flatterers of vanity Dryden has never been charged with any personal agency unworthy of a good character: he abetted vice and vanity only with his pen. One of his enemies has accused him of lewdness in his conversation; but, if accusation without proof be credited, who shall be innocent?

His works afford too many examples of dissolute licentiousness, and abject adulation; but they were probably, like his merriment, artificial and constrained; the effects of study and meditation, and his trade rather than his pleasure.

Of the mind that can trade in corruption, and can deliberately pollute itself with ideal wickedness for the sake of spreading the contagion in society, I wish not to conceal or excuse the depravity.—Such degradation of the dignity of genius, such abuse of superlative abilities, cannot be contemplated but with grief and indignation. What consolation can be had, Dryden has afforded, by living to repent, and to testify his repentance.

Of

Of dramattick immorality he did not want examples among his predecessors, or companions among his contemporaries; but in the meanness and fervility of hyperbolical adulation, I know not whether, since the days in which the Roman emperors were deified, he has been ever equalled, except by Afra Behn in an address to Eleanor Gwyn. When once he has undertaken the task of praise, he no longer retains shame in himself, nor supposes it in his patron. As many odoriferous bodies are observed to diffuse perfumes from year to year, without sensible diminution of bulk or weight, he appears never to have impoverished his mint of flattery by his expences, however lavish. He had all the forms of excellence, intellectual and moral, combined in his mind, with endless variation; and when he had scattered on the hero of the day the golden shower of wit and virtue, he had ready for him, whom he wished to court on the morrow, new wit and virtue with another stamp. Of this kind of meanness he never seems to decline the practice, or lament the necessity: he considers the great as entitled to encomiastick homage, and brings praise rather as a tribute than a gift,
more

more delighted with the fertility of his invention, than mortified by the prostitution of his judgement. It is indeed not certain, that on these occasions his judgement much rebelled against his interest. There are minds which easily sink into submission, that look on grandeur with undistinguishing reverence, and discover no defect where there is elevation of rank and affluence of riches.

With his praises of others and of himself is always intermingled a strain of discontent and lamentation, a fullen growl of resentment, or a querulous murmur of distress. His works are under-valued, his merit is unrewarded, and "he has few thanks to pay his stars that he "was born among Englishmen." To his critics he is sometimes contemptuous, sometimes resentful, and sometimes submissive. The writer who thinks his works formed for duration, mistakes his interest when he mentions his enemies. He degrades his own dignity by shewing that he was affected by their censures, and gives lasting importance to names, which, left to themselves, would vanish from remembrance. From this principle Dryden did not often depart; his complaints are for
the

the greater part general; he seldom pollutes his page with an adverse name. He condescended indeed to a controversy with Settle, in which he perhaps may be considered rather as assaulting than repelling; and since Settle is sunk into oblivion, his libel remains injurious only to himself.

Among answers to criticks, no poetical attacks, or altercations, are to be included; they are like other poems, effusions of genius, produced as much to obtain praise as to obviate censure. These Dryden practised, and in these he excelled.

Of Collier, Blackmore, and Milbourne, he has made mention in the preface to his Fables. To the censure of Collier, whose remarks may be rather termed admonitions than criticisms, he makes little reply; being, at the age of sixty-eight, attentive to better things than the claps of a playhouse. He complains of Collier's rudeness, and the "horse-play of his raillery;" and asserts that "in many places" "he has perverted by his glosses the meaning" of what he censures; but in other things he confesses that he is justly taxed; and says, with great calmness and candour, "I have pleaded

“ guilty to all thoughts or expressions of mine
 “ that can be truly accused of obscenity, im-
 “ morality, or profaneness, and retract them.
 “ If he be my enemy, let him triumph; if he
 “ be my friend, he will be glad of my repen-
 “ tance.” Yet as our best dispositions are im-
 perfect, he left standing in the same book a re-
 flection on Collier of great asperity, and indeed
 of more asperity than wit.

Blackmore he represents as made his enemy
 by the poem of *Absalom and Achitophel*, which
 “ he thinks a little hard upon his fanatick pa-
 “ trons;” and charges him with borrowing the
 plan of his *Arthur* from the preface to Juvenal,
 “ though he had,” says he, “ the baseness not
 “ to acknowledge his benefactor, but instead of
 “ it to traduce me in a libel.”

The libel in which Blackmore traduced him
 was a *Satire upon Wit*; in which, having la-
 mented the exuberance of false wit and the de-
 ficiency of true, he proposes that all wit should
 be re-coined before it is current, and appoints
 masters of assay who shall reject all that is light
 or debased.

’Tis true, that when the coarse and worthless
 Is purg’d away, there will be mighty loss; [dross
 Ev’n

Ev'n Congreve, Southern, manly Wycherley,
 When thus refin'd, will grievous sufferers be;
 Into the melting-pot when Dryden comes,
 What horrid stench will rise, what noisome fumes!
 How will he shrink, when all his lewd allay,
 And wicked mixture, shall be purg'd away!

Thus stands the passage in the last edition; but in the original there was an abatement of the censure, beginning thus:

But what remains will be so pure, twill bear
 Th' examination of the most severe.

Blackmore, finding the censure resented, and the civility disregarded, ungenerously omitted the softer part. Such variations discover a writer who consults his passions more than his virtue; and it may be reasonably supposed that Dryden imputes his enmity to its true cause.

Of Milbourne he wrote only in general terms, such as are always ready at the call of anger, whether just or not: a short extract will be sufficient. "He pretends a quarrel to
 "me, that I have fallen foul upon priesthood; if
 "I have, I am only to ask pardon of good
 "priests, and am afraid his share of the reparation will come to little. Let him be satisf-

“fied that he shall never be able to force him-
 “self upon me for an adversary; I contemn
 “him too much to enter into competition with
 “him.

“As for the rest of those who have written
 “against me, they are such scoundrels that
 “they deserve not the least notice to be taken
 “of them. Blackmore and Milbourne are
 “only distinguished from the crowd by being
 “remembered to their infamy.”

Dryden indeed discovered, in many of his writings, an affected and absurd malignity to priests and priesthood, which naturally raised him many enemies, and which was sometimes as unseasonably resented as it was exerted. Trapp is angry that he calls the sacrificer in the *Georgicks* “the holy butcher:” the translation is not indeed ridiculous; but Trapp’s anger arises from his zeal, not for the author, but the priest; as if any reproach of the follies of Paganism could be extended to the preachers of truth.

Dryden’s dislike of the priesthood is imputed by Langbaine, and I think by Brown, to a repulse which he suffered when he solicited ordination; but he denies, in the preface to his
 Fables,

Fables, that he ever designed to enter into the church; and such a denial he would not have hazarded, if he could have been convicted of falsehood.

Malevolence to the clergy is seldom at a great distance from irreverence of religion, and Dryden affords no exception to this observation. His writings exhibit many passages, which, with all the allowance that can be made for characters and occasions, are such as piety would not have admitted, and such as may vitiate light and unprincipled minds. But there is no reason for supposing that he disbelieved the religion which he disobeyed. He forgot his duty rather than disowned it. His tendency to profaneness is the effect of levity, negligence, and loose conversation, with a desire of accommodating himself to the corruption of the times, by venturing to be wicked as far as he durst. When he professed himself a convert to Popery, he did not pretend to have received any new conviction of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity.

The persecution of criticks was not the worst of his vexations; he was much more

disturbed by the importunities of want. His complaints of poverty are so frequently repeated, either with the dejection of weakness sinking in helpless misery, or the indignation of merit claiming its tribute from mankind, that it is impossible not to detest the age which could impose on such a man the necessity of such sollicitations, or not to despise the man who could submit to such sollicitations without necessity.

Whether by the world's neglect, or his own imprudence, I am afraid that the greatest part of his life was passed in exigences. Such outcries were surely never uttered but in severe pain. Of his supplies or his expences no probable estimate can now be made. Except the salary of the Laureat, to which king James added the office of Historiographer, perhaps with some additional emoluments, his whole revenue seems to have been casual; and it is well known that he seldom lives frugally who lives by chance. Hope is always liberal; and they that trust her promises make little scruple of revelling to-day on the profits of the morrow.

Of

Of his plays the profit was not great, and of the produce of his other works very little intelligence can be had. By discoursing with the late amiable Mr. Tonson, I could not find that any memorials of the transactions between his predecessor and Dryden had been preserved, except the following papers :

“ I do hereby promise to pay John Dryden,
“ Esq. or order, on the 25th of March, 1699;
“ the sum of two hundred and fifty guineas, in
“ consideration of ten thousand verses, which
“ the said John Dryden, Esq. is to deliver to
“ me Jacob Tonson, when finished, whereof
“ seven thousand five hundred verses, more or
“ less, are already in the said Jacob Tonson’s
“ possession. And I do hereby farther promise,
“ and engage myself, to make up the said
“ sum of two hundred and fifty guineas three
“ hundred pounds sterling to the said John
“ Dryden, Esq. his executors, administra-
“ tors, or assigns, at the beginning of the
“ second impression of the said ten thousand
“ verses.

“ In witness whereof I have hereunto set

P 4

“ my

“ my hand and seal, this 20th day of March,
 “ 169⁸.

“ Jacob Tonson,

“ Sealed and delivered, be-
 “ ing first duly stampd,
 “ pursuant to the acts of
 “ parliament for that pur-
 “ pose, in the presence of
 “ Ben. Portlock.
 “ Will. Congreve.”

“ March 24th, 1698.

“ Received then of Mr. Jacob Tonson the
 “ sum of two hundred sixty-eight pounds fif-
 “ teen shillings, in pursuance of an agreement
 “ for ten thousand verses, to be delivered by
 “ me to the said Jacob Tonson, whereof I
 “ have already delivered to him about seven
 “ thousand five hundred, more or less; he the
 “ said Jacob Tonson being obliged to make
 “ up the foresaid sum of two hundred sixty-
 “ eight pounds fifteen shillings three hundred
 “ pounds, at the beginning of the second im-
 “ pression of the foresaid ten thousand verses;

“ I say, received by me

“ John Dryden.

“ Witness Charles Dryden.”

Two

Two hundred and fifty guineas, at 1*l.* 1*s.* 6*d.* is 268*l.* 15*s.*

It is manifest, from the dates of this contract, that it relates to the volume of Fables, which contains about twelve thousand verses, and for which therefore the payment must have been afterwards enlarged.

I have been told of another letter yet remaining, in which he desires Tonson to bring him money, to pay for a watch which he had ordered for his son, and which the maker would not leave without the price.

The inevitable consequence of poverty is dependence. Dryden had probably no recourse in his exigences but to his bookseller. The particular character of Tonson I do not know; but the general conduct of traders was much less liberal in those times than in our own; their views were narrower, and their manners grosser. To the mercantile ruggedness of that race, the delicacy of the poet was sometimes exposed. Lord Bolingbroke, who in his youth had cultivated poetry, related to Dr. King of Oxford, that one day, when he visited Dryden, they heard, as they were conversing, another person entering the house. "This," said Dry-

Dryden, "is Tonson. You will take care
 "not to depart before he goes away; for I
 "have not completed the sheet which I pro-
 "mised him; and if you leave me unpro-
 "tested, I must suffer all the rudeness to
 "which his resentment can prompt his
 "tongue."

What rewards he obtained for his poems, besides the payment of the bookseller, cannot be known: Mr. Derrick, who consulted some of his relations, was informed that his Fables obtained five hundred pounds from the dutchess of Ormond; a present not unsuitable to the magnificence of that splendid family; and he quotes Moyle, as relating that forty pounds were paid by a musical society for the use of *Alexander's Feast*.

In those days the œconomy of government was yet unsettled, and the payments of the Exchequer were dilatory and uncertain: of this disorder there is reason to believe that the Laureat sometimes felt the effects; for in one of his prefaces he complains of those, who, being intrusted with the distribution of the Prince's bounty, suffer those that depend upon it to languish in penury.

Of

Of his petty habits or slight amusements, tradition has retained little. Of the only two men whom I have found to whom he was personally known, one told me, that at the house which he frequented, called Will's Coffee-house, the appeal upon any literary dispute was made to him; and the other related, that his armed chair, which in the winter had a settled and prescriptive place by the fire, was in the summer placed in the balcony, and that he called the two places his winter and his summer seat. This is all the intelligence which his two survivors afforded me.

One of his opinions will do him no honour in the present age, though in his own time, at least in the beginning of it, he was far from having it confined to himself. He put great confidence in the prognostications of judicial astrology. In the Appendix to the Life of Congreve is a narrative of some of his predictions wonderfully fulfilled; but I know not the writer's means of information, or character of veracity. That he had the configurations of the horoscope in his mind, and considered them as influencing the affairs of men, he does not forbear to hint.

The

The utmost malice of the stars is past.—

Now frequent *trines* the happier lights among,
And *high-rais'd Jove*, from his dark prison freed,
Those weights took off that on his planet hung,
Will gloriously the new-laid works succeed.

He has elsewhere shewn his attention to the planetary powers; and in the preface to his Fables has endeavoured obliquely to justify his superstition, by attributing the same to some of the Ancients. The latter, added to this narrative, leaves no doubt of his notions or practice.

So slight and so scanty is the knowledge which I have been able to collect concerning the private life and domestick manners of a man, whom every English generation must mention with reverence as a critick and a poet.

DRYDEN may be properly considered as the father of English criticism, as the writer who first taught us to determine upon principles the merit of composition. Of our former poets, the greatest dramatist wrote without rules, conducted through life and nature by a genius that rarely misled, and rarely deserted him. Of the rest, those who knew the laws of propriety had neglected to teach them.

Two *Arts of English Poetry* were written in the days of Elizabeth by Webb and Puttenham, from which something might be learned, and a few hints had been given by Jonson and Cowley; but Dryden's *Essay on Dramatick Poetry* was the first regular and valuable treatise on the art of writing.

He who, having formed his opinions in the present age of English literature, turns back to peruse this dialogue, will not perhaps find much increase of knowledge, or much novelty of instruction; but he is to remember that critical principles were then in the hands of a few, who had gathered them partly from the Ancients, and partly from the Italians and French. The structure of dramatick

matick poems was then not generally understood. Audiences applauded by instinct; and poets perhaps often pleased by chance.

A writer who obtains his full purpose loses himself in his own lustre. Of an opinion which is no longer doubted, the evidence ceases to be examined. Of an art universally practised, the first teacher is forgotten. Learning once made popular is no longer learning; it has the appearance of something which we have bestowed upon ourselves, as the dew appears to rise from the field which it refreshes.

To judge rightly of an author, we must transport ourselves to his time, and examine what were the wants of his contemporaries, and what were his means of supplying them. That which is easy at one time was difficult at another. Dryden at least imported his science, and gave his country what it wanted before; or rather, he imported only the materials, and manufactured them by his own skill.

The dialogue on the Drama was one of his first essays of criticism, written when he was yet a timorous candidate for reputation, and therefore laboured with that diligence which he might allow himself somewhat to remit, when his
name

name gave sanction to his positions, and his awe of the public was abated, partly by custom, and partly by success. It will not be easy to find, in all the opulence of our language, a treatise so artfully variegated with successive representations of opposite probabilities, so enlivened with imagery, so brightened with illustrations. His portraits of the English dramatists are wrought with great spirit and diligence. The account of Shakspeare may stand as a perpetual model of encomiastick criticism; exact without minuteness, and lofty without exaggeration. The praise lavished by Longinus, on the attestation of the heroes of Marathon, by Demosthenes, fades away before it. In a few lines is exhibited a character, so extensive in its comprehension, and so curious in its limitations, that nothing can be added, diminished, or reformed; nor can the editors and admirers of Shakspeare, in all their emulation of reverence, boast of much more than of having diffused and paraphrased this epitome of excellence, of having changed Dryden's gold for baser metal, of lower value though of greater bulk.

In this, and in all his other essays on the same subject, the criticism of Dryden is the
cri-

criticism of a poet; not a dull collection of theorems, nor a rude detection of faults, which perhaps the censor was not able to have committed; but a gay and vigorous dissertation, where delight is mingled with instruction, and where the author proves his right of judgment, by his power of performance.

The different manner and effect with which critical knowledge may be conveyed, was perhaps never more clearly exemplified than in the performances of Rymer and Dryden. It was said of a dispute between two mathematicians, "*malim cum Scaligero errare, quam cum Clavio recte sapere;*" that "it was more eligible to go wrong with one than right with the other." A tendency of the same kind every mind must feel at the perusal of Dryden's prefaces and Rymer's discourses. With Dryden we are wandering in quest of Truth; whom we find, if we find her at all, dressed in the graces of elegance; and if we miss her, the labour of the pursuit rewards itself; we are led only through fragrance and flowers. Rymer, without taking a nearer, takes a rougher way; every step is to be made through thorns and brambles; and Truth, if we meet her,

her, appears repulsive by her mien, and ungraceful by her habit. Dryden's criticism has the majesty of a queen; Rymer's has the ferocity of a tyrant.

As he had studied with great diligence the art of poetry, and enlarged or rectified his notions, by experience perpetually increasing, he had his mind stored with principles and observations; he poured out his knowledge with little labour; for of labour, notwithstanding the multiplicity of his productions, there is sufficient reason to suspect that he was not a lover. To write *con amore*, with fondness for the employment, with perpetual touches and retouches, with unwillingness to take leave of his own idea, and an unwearied pursuit of unattainable perfection, was, I think, no part of his character.

His criticism may be considered as general or occasional. In his general precepts, which depend upon the nature of things, and the structure of the human mind, he may doubtless be safely recommended to the confidence of the reader; but his occasional and particular positions were sometimes interested, sometimes negligent, and sometimes capricious. It is not without reason that Trapp, speaking of

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the praises which he bestows on Palamon and Arcite, says, “ Novimus judicium Drydeni de
 “ poemate quodam *Chauceri*, pulchro fane illo,
 “ & admodum laudando, nimirum quod non
 “ modo vere epicum fit, sed *Iliada* etiam atque
 “ *Æneada* æquet, imo superet. Sed novimus
 “ eodem tempore viri illius maximi non semper
 “ accuratissimas esse censuras, nec ad severissi-
 “ mam critices normam exactas: illo iudice id
 “ plerumque optimum est, quod nunc præ
 “ manibus habet, & in quo nunc occupatur.”

He is therefore by no means constant to himself. His defence and desertion of dramatick rhyme is generally known. *Spence*, in his remarks on Pope's *Odyssey*, produces what he thinks an unconquerable quotation from Dryden's preface to the *Eneid*, in favour of translating an epick poem into blank verse; but he forgets that when his author attempted the *Iliad*, some years afterwards, he departed from his own decision, and translated into rhyme.

When he has any objection to obviate, or any licence to defend, he is not very scrupulous about what he asserts, nor very cautious, if the present purpose be served, not to entan-
 gle

gle himself in his own sophistries. But when all arts are exhausted, like other hunted animals, he sometimes stands at bay; when he cannot disown the grossness of one of his plays, he declares that he knows not any law that prescribes morality to a comick poet.

His remarks on ancient or modern writers are not always to be trusted. His parallel of the versification of Ovid with that of Claudian has been very justly censured by *Sewel**. His comparison of the first line of Virgil with the first of Statius is not happier. Virgil, he says, is soft and gentle, and would have thought Statius mad, if he had heard him thundering out

Quæ superimposito moles geminata colosso.

Statius perhaps heats himself, as he proceeds, to exaggerations somewhat hyperbolical; but undoubtedly Virgil would have been too hasty, if he had condemned him to straw for one founding line. Dryden wanted an instance, and the first that occurred was imprest into the service.

* Preface to Ovid's *Metamorphoses*. Dr. J.

What he wishes to say, he says at hazard; he cited *Gorbuduc*, which he had never seen; gives a false account of *Chapman's* versification; and discovers, in the preface to his *Fables*, that he translated the first book of the *Iliad*, without knowing what was in the second.

It will be difficult to prove that Dryden ever made any great advances in literature. As having distinguished himself at Westminster under the tuition of Busby, who advanced his scholars to a height of knowledge very rarely attained in grammar-schools, he resided afterwards at Cambridge, it is not to be supposed, that his skill in the ancient languages was deficient, compared with that of common students; but his scholastick acquisitions seem not proportionate to his opportunities and abilities. He could not, like Milton or Cowley, have made his name illustrious merely by his learning. He mentions but few books, and those such as lie in the beaten track of regular study; from which if ever he departs, he is in danger of losing himself in unknown regions.

In his Dialogue on the Drama, he pronounces with great confidence that the Latin tragedy of *Medea* is not Ovid's, because it is
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not sufficiently interesting and pathetick. He might have determined the question upon surer evidence ; for it is quoted by Quintilian as the work of Seneca ; and the only line which remains of Ovid's play, for one line is left us, is not there to be found. There was therefore no need of the gravity of conjecture, or the discussion of plot or sentiment, to find what was already known upon higher authority than such discussions can ever reach.

His literature, though not always free from ostentation, will be commonly found either obvious, and made his own by the art of dressing it ; or superficial, which, by what he gives, shews what he wanted ; or erroneous, hastily collected, and negligently scattered.

Yet it cannot be said that his genius is ever unprovided of matter, or that his fancy languishes in penury of ideas. His works abound with knowledge, and sparkle with illustrations. There is scarcely any science or faculty that does not supply him with occasional images and lucky similitudes ; every page discovers a mind very widely acquainted both with art and nature, and in full possession of great stores of intellectual wealth. Of him that knows much,

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it is natural to suppose that he has read with diligence; yet I rather believe that the knowledge of Dryden was gleaned from accidental intelligence and various conversation, by a quick apprehension, a judicious selection, and a happy memory, a keen appetite of knowledge, and a powerful digestion, by vigilance that permitted nothing to pass without notice, and a habit of reflection that suffered nothing useful to be lost. A mind like Dryden's, always curious, always active, to which every understanding was proud to be associated, and of which every one solicited the regard, by an ambitious display of himself, had a more pleasant, perhaps a nearer way to knowledge than by the silent progress of solitary reading. I do not suppose that he despised books, or intentionally neglected them; but that he was carried out, by the impetuosity of his genius, to more vivid and speedy instructors; and that his studies were rather desultory and fortuitous than constant and systematical.

It must be confessed that he scarcely ever appears to want book-learning but when he mentions books; and to him may be transferred

ferred the praise which he gives his master Charles :

His conversation, wit, and parts,
His knowledge in the noblest useful arts,
Were such, dead authors could not give,
But habitudes of those that live;
Who lighting him, did greater lights receive;
He drain'd from all, and all they knew,
His apprehensions quick, his judgement true:
That the most learn'd with shame confess
His knowledge more, his reading only less.

Of all this, however, if the proof be demanded, I will not undertake to give it; the atoms of probability, of which my opinion has been formed, lie scattered over all his works; and by him who thinks the question worth his notice, his works must be perused with very close attention.

Criticism, either didactick or defensive, occupies almost all his prose, except those pages which he has devoted to his patrons; but none of his prefaces were ever thought tedious. They have not the formality of a settled style, in which the first half of the sentence betrays the other. The clauses are never balanced,

nor the periods modelled: every word seems to drop by chance, though it falls into its proper place. Nothing is cold or languid; the whole is airy, animated, and vigorous; what is little, is gay; what is great, is splendid. He may be thought to mention himself too frequently; but while he forces himself upon our esteem, we cannot refuse him to stand high in his own. Every thing is excused by the play of images and the spriteliness of expression. Though all is easy, nothing is feeble; though all seems careless, there is nothing harsh; and though, since his earlier works more than a century has passed, they have nothing yet uncouth or obsolete.

He who writes much, will not easily escape a manner, such a recurrence of particular modes as may be easily noted. Dryden is always *another and the same*; he does not exhibit a second time the same elegances in the same form, nor appears to have any art other than that of expressing with clearness what he thinks with vigour. His style could not easily be imitated, either seriously or ludicrously; for, being always equable and always varied, it has no prominent or discriminative characters.

The

The beauty who is totally free from disproportion of parts and features, cannot be ridiculed by an overcharged resemblance.

From his prose, however, Dryden derives only his accidental and secondary praise; the veneration with which his name is pronounced by every cultivator of English literature, is paid to him as he refined the language, improved the sentiments, and tuned the numbers of English Poetry.

After about half a century of forced thoughts, and rugged metre, some advances towards nature and harmony had been already made by Waller and Denham; they had shewn that long discourses in rhyme grew more pleasing when they were broken into couplets, and that verse consisted not only in the number but the arrangement of syllables.

But though they did much, who can deny that they left much to do? their works were not many, nor were their minds of very ample comprehension. More examples of more modes of composition were necessary for the establishment of regularity, and the introduction of propriety in word and thought.

Every

Every language of a learned nation necessarily divides itself into diction scholastick and popular, grave and familiar, elegant and gross; and from a nice distinction of these different parts, arises a great part of the beauty of style. But if we except a few minds, the favourites of nature, to whom their own original rectitude was in the place of rules, this delicacy of selection was little known to our authors; our speech lay before them in a heap of confusion, and every man took for every purpose what chance might offer him.

There was therefore before the time of Dryden no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestick use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar, or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or on coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions, or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves which they should transmit to things.

Those

Those happy combinations of words which distinguish poetry from prose had been rarely attempted; we had few elegances or flowers of speech, the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble, or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another.

It may be doubted whether Waller and Denham could have over-born the prejudices which had long prevailed, and which even then were sheltered by the protection of Cowley. The new versification, as it was called, may be considered as owing its establishment to Dryden; from whose time it is apparent that English poetry has had no tendency to relapse to its former savageness.

The affluence and comprehension of our language is very illustriously displayed in our poetical translations of Ancient Writers: a work which the French seem to relinquish in despair, and which we were long unable to perform with dexterity. Ben Jonson thought it necessary to copy Horace almost word by word; Feltham, his contemporary and adversary, considers it as indispensably requisite in a translation to give line for line. It is said that Sandys, whom Dryden calls the best versifier

fier of the last age, has struggled hard to comprise every book of the English Metamorphoses in the same number of verses with the original. Holyday had nothing in view but to shew that he understood his author, with so little regard to the grandeur of his diction, or the volubility of his numbers, that his metres can hardly be called verses; they cannot be read without reluctance, nor will the labour always be rewarded by understanding them. Cowley saw that such copyers were a servile race; he asserted his liberty, and spread his wings so boldly that he left his authors. It was reserved for Dryden to fix the limits of poetical liberty, and give us just rules and examples of translation.

When languages are formed upon different principles, it is impossible that the same modes of expression should always be elegant in both. While they run on together, the closest translation may be considered as the best; but when they divaricate, each must take its natural course. Where correspondence cannot be obtained, it is necessary to be content with something equivalent. "Translation therefore,"
says

says Dryden, "is not so loose as paraphrase, nor so close as metaphrase."

All polished languages have different styles; the concise, the diffuse, the lofty, and the humble. In the proper choice of style consists the resemblance which Dryden principally exacts from the translator. He is to exhibit his author's thoughts in such a dress of diction as the author would have given them, had his language been English: rugged magnificence is not to be softened; hyperbolical ostentation is not to be repressed; nor sententious affectation to have its points blunted. A translator is to be like his author; it is not his business to excell him.

The reasonableness of these rules seems sufficient for their vindication; and the effects produced by observing them were so happy, that I know not whether they were ever opposed but by Sir Edward Sherburne, a man whose learning was greater than his powers of poetry; and who, being better qualified to give the meaning than the spirit of Seneca, has introduced his version of three tragedies by a defence of close translation. The authority of Horace, which the new translators cited in defence

fence of their practice, he has, by a judicious explanation, taken fairly from them; but reason wants not Horace to support it.

It seldom happens that all the necessary causes concur to any great effect: will is wanting to power, or power to will, or both are impeded by external obstructions. The exigences in which Dryden was condemned to pass his life, are reasonably supposed to have blasted his genius, to have driven out his works in a state of immaturity, and to have intercepted the full-blown elegance which longer growth would have supplied.

Poverty, like other rigid powers, is sometimes too hastily accused. If the excellence of Dryden's Works was lessened by his indigence, their number was increased; and I know not how it will be proved, that if he had written less he would have written better; or that indeed he would have undergone the toil of an author, if he had not been solicited by something more pressing than the love of praise.

But, as is said by his Sebastian,

What had been, is unknown; what is, appears.

We

We know that Dryden's several productions were so many successive expedients for his support; his plays were therefore often borrowed; and his poems were almost all occasional.

In an occasional performance no height of excellence can be expected from any mind, however fertile in itself, and however stored with acquisitions. He whose work is general and arbitrary, has the choice of his matter, and takes that which his inclination and his studies have best qualified him to display and decorate. He is at liberty to delay his publication, till he has satisfied his friends and himself; till he has reformed his first thoughts by subsequent examination; and polished away those faults which the precipitance of ardent composition is likely to leave behind it. Virgil is related to have poured out a great number of lines in the morning, and to have passed the day in reducing them to fewer.

The occasional poet is circumscribed by the narrowness of his subject. Whatever can happen to man has happened so often that little remains for fancy or invention. We have been all born; we have most of us been married;

married; and so many have died before us, that our deaths can supply but few materials for a poet. In the fate of princes the publick has an interest; and what happens to them of good or evil, the poets have always considered as business for the Muse. But after so many inaugural gratulations, nuptial hymns, and funeral dirges, he must be highly favoured by nature, or by fortune, who says any thing not said before. Even war and conquest, however splendid, suggest no new images; the triumphal chariot of a victorious monarch can be decked only with those ornaments that have graced his predecessors.

Not only matter but time is wanting. The poem must not be delayed till the occasion is forgotten. The lucky moments of animated imagination cannot be attended; elegances and illustrations cannot be multiplied by gradual accumulation; the composition must be dispatched while conversation is yet busy, and admiration fresh; and haste is to be made, lest some other event should lay hold upon mankind.

Occasional compositions may however secure to a writer the praise both of learning and facility;

cility; for they cannot be the effect of long study, and must be furnished immediately from the treasures of the mind.

The death of Cromwell was the first publick event which called forth Dryden's poetical powers. His heroick stanzas have beauties and defects; the thoughts are vigorous, and, though not always proper, shew a mind replete with ideas; the numbers are smooth; and the diction, if not altogether correct, is elegant and easy.

Davenant was perhaps at this time his favourite author, though Gondibert never appears to have been popular; and from Davenant he learned to please his ear with the stanza of four lines alternately rhymed.

Dryden very early formed his versification: there are in this early production no traces of Donne's or Jonson's ruggedness; but he did not so soon free his mind from the ambition of forced conceits. In his verses on the Restoration, he says of the King's exile,

He, toss'd by Fate—

Could taste no sweets of youth's desired age,
But found his life too true a pilgrimage.

VOL. II.

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And

And afterwards, to shew how virtue and wisdom are increased by adversity, he makes this remark :

Well might the ancient poets then confer
On Night the honour'd name of *counsellor*,
Since, struck with rays of prosperous fortune blind,
We light alone in dark afflictions find.

His praise of Monk's dexterity comprises such a cluster of thoughts unallied to one another, as will not elsewhere be easily found :

'Twas Monk, whom providence design'd to loose
Those real bonds false freedom did impose.
The blessed saints that watch'd this turning scene,
Did from their stars with joyful wonder lean,
To see small clues draw vastest weights along,
Not in their bulk, but in their order strong.
Thus pencils can by one slight touch restore
Smiles to that changed face that wept before.
With ease such fond chimæras we pursue,
As fancy frames for fancy to subdue;
But, when ourselves to action we betake,
It shuns the mint like gold that chymists make.
How hard was then his task, at once to be
What in the body natural we see !
Man's Architect distinctly did ordain
The charge of muscles, nerves, and of the brain,
Through

Through viewless conduits spirits to dispense
The springs of motion from the seat of sense.
'Twas not the hasty product of a day,
But the well-ripen'd fruit of wise delay.
He, like a patient angler, ere he strook,
Would let them play a-while upon the hook.
Our healthful food the stomach labours thus,
At first embracing what it strait doth crush.
Wife leaches will not vain receipts obtrude,
While growing pains pronounce the humours
 crude;
Deaf to complaints, they wait upon the ill,
Till some safe crisis authorize their skill.

He had not yet learned, indeed he never
learned well, to forbear the improper use of
mythology. After having rewarded the heathen
deities for their care,

With Alga who the sacred altar strows?
To all the sea-gods Charles an offering owes;
A bull to thee, Portunus, shall be slain;
A ram to you, ye Tempests of the Main.

He tells us, in the language of religion,
Prayer storm'd the skies, and ravish'd Charles
 from thence,
As heaven itself, is took by violence.

And afterwards mentions one of the most awful passages of Sacred History.

Other conceits there are, too curious to be quite omitted; as,

For by example most we sinn'd before,
And, glass-like, clearness mix'd with frailty bore.

How far he was yet from thinking it necessary to found his sentiments on nature, appears from the extravagance of his fictions and hyperboles.

The winds, that never moderation knew,
Afraid to blow too much, too faintly blew;
Or, out of breath with joy, could not enlarge
Their straiten'd lungs.—

It is no longer motion cheats your view;
As you meet it, the land approacheth you;
The land returns, and in the white it wears
The marks of penitence, and sorrow bears.

I know not whether this fancy, however little be its value, was not borrowed. A French poet read to Malherbe some verses, in which he represents France as moving out of its place to receive the king. “Though this,” said Malherbe, “was in my time, I do not remember it.”

His

His poem on the *Coronation* has a more even tenour of thought. Some lines deserve to be quoted.

You have already quench'd sedition's brand;
And zeal, that burnt it, only warms the land;
The jealous sects that durst not trust their cause
So far from their own will as to the laws,
Him for their umpire, and their synod take,
And their appeal alone to Cæsar make.

Here may be found one particle of that old verification, of which, I believe, in all his works, there is not another:

Nor is it duty, or our hope alone,
Creates that joy, but full *fruition*.

In the verses to the lord chancellor Clarendon, two years afterwards, is a conceit so hopeless at the first view, that few would have attempted it; and so successfully laboured, that though at last it gives the reader more perplexity than pleasure, and seems hardly worth the study that it costs, yet it must be valued as a proof of a mind at once subtle and comprehensive:

In open prospect nothing bounds our eye,
Until the earth seems join'd unto the sky :
So in this hemisphere our utmost view
Is only bounded by our king and you :
Our sight is limited where you are join'd,
And beyond that no farther heaven can find.
So well your virtues do with his agree,
That, though your orbs of different greatness be,
Yet both are for each other's use dispos'd,
His to enclose, and yours to be enclos'd.
Nor could another in your room have been,
Except an emptiness had come between.

The comparison of the Chancellor to the
Indies leaves all resemblance too far behind it :

And as the Indies were not found before
Those rich perfumes which from the happy shore
The winds upon their balmy wings convey'd,
Whose guilty sweetness first their world betray'd ;
So by your counsels we are brought to view
A new and undiscover'd world in you.

There is another comparison, for there is
little else in the poem, of which, though per-
haps it cannot be explained into plain prosaick
meaning, the mind perceives enough to be de-
lighted, and readily forgives its obscurity, for
its magnificence :

How

How strangely active are the arts of peace,
Whose restless motions less than wars do cease !
Peace is not freed from labour, but from noise ;
And war more force, but not more pains employs.
Such is the mighty swiftness of your mind,
That, like the earth's, it leaves our sense behind ;
While you so smoothly turn and rowl our sphere,
That rapid motion does but rest appear.
For as in nature's swiftness, with the throng
Of flying orbs while ours is borne along,
All seems at rest to the deluded eye,
Mov'd by the soul of the same harmony :
So carry'd on by your unwearied care,
We rest in peace, and yet in motion share.

To this succeed four lines, which perhaps afford Dryden's first attempt at those penetrating remarks on human nature, for which he seems to have been peculiarly formed :

Let envy then those crimes within you see,
From which the happy never must be free ;
Envy that does with misery reside,
The joy and the revenge of ruin'd pride.

Into this poem he seems to have collected all his powers ; and after this he did not often bring upon his anvil such stubborn and unmal-leable thoughts ; but, as a specimen of his

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abilities

abilities to unite the most unfociable matter, he has concluded with lines, of which I think not myself obliged to tell the meaning :

Yet unimpair'd with labours, or with time,
Your age but seems to a new youth to climb.
Thus heavenly bodies do our time beget,
And measure change, but share no part of it:
And still it shall without a weight increase,
Like this new year, whose motions never cease.
For since the glorious course you have begun
Is led by Charles, as that is by the sun,
It must both weightless and immortal prove,
Because the centre of it is above.

In the *Annus Mirabilis* he returned to the quatrain, which from that time he totally quitted, perhaps from this experience of its inconvenience, for he complains of its difficulty. This is one of his greatest attempts. He had subjects equal to his abilities, a great naval war, and the Fire of London. Battles have always been described in heroick poetry; but a sea-fight and artillery had yet something of novelty. New arts are long in the world before poets describe them; for they borrow every thing from their predecessors, and commonly derive very little from nature or from life,

Boileau

Boileau was the first French writer that had ever hazarded in verse the mention of modern war, or the effects of gunpowder. We, who are less afraid of novelty, had already possession of those dreadful images. Waller had described a sea-fight. Milton had not yet transferred the invention of fire-arms to the rebellious angels.

This poem is written with great diligence, yet does not fully answer the expectation raised by such subjects and such a writer. With the stanza of Davenant he has sometimes his vein of parenthesis, and incidental disquisition, and stops his narrative for a wise remark.

The general fault is, that he affords more sentiment than description, and does not so much impress scenes upon the fancy, as deduce consequences and make comparisons.

The initial stanzas have rather too much resemblance to the first lines of Waller's poem on the war with Spain; perhaps such a beginning is natural, and could not be avoided without affectation. Both Waller and Dryden might take their hint from the poem on
the

the civil war of Rome, "Orbem jam totum," &c.

Of the king collecting his navy, he says,
 It seems as every ship their sovereign knows,
 His awful summons they so soon obey;
 So hear the scaly herds when Proteus blows,
 And so to pasture follow through the sea.

It would not be hard to believe that Dryden had written the two first lines seriously, and that some wag had added the two latter in burlesque. Who would expect the lines that immediately follow, which are indeed perhaps indecently hyperbolic, but certainly in a mode totally different?

To see this fleet upon the ocean move,
 Angels drew wide the curtains of the skies;
 And heaven, as if there wanted lights above,
 For tapers made two glaring comets rise.

The description of the attempt at Bergen will afford a very compleat specimen of the descriptions in this poem:

And now approach'd their fleet from India, fraught
 With all the riches of the rising sun:
 And precious sand from southern climates brought,
 The fatal regions where the war begun.

Like

Like hunted castors, conscious of their store,[bring:

 Their way-laid wealth to Norway's coast they
Then first the North's cold bosom spices bore,
 And winter brooded on the eastern spring.

By the rich scent we found our perfum'd prey,[lie;
 Which, flank'd with rocks, did close in covert
And round about their murdering cannon lay,
 At once to threaten and invite the eye.

Fiercer than cannon, and than rocks more hard,
 The English undertake th' unequal war:
Seven ships alone, by which the port is barr'd,
 Besiege the Indies, and all Denmark dare.

These fight like husbands, but like lovers those:
 These fain would keep, and those more fain enjoy:
And to such height their frantic passion grows,
 That what both love, both hazard to destroy:

Amidst whole heaps of spices lights a ball,
 And now their odours arm'd against them fly:
Some precious by shatter'd porcelain fall,
 And some by aromatic splinters die:

And, though by tempests of the prize bereft,
 In heaven's inclemency some ease we find:
Our foes we vanquish'd by our valour left,
 And only yielded to the seas and wind.

In this manner is the sublime too often
mingled with the ridiculous. The Dutch seek

a shelter for a wealthy fleet: this surely needed no illustration; yet they must fly, not like all the rest of mankind on the same occasion, but “like hunted castors;” and they might with strict propriety be hunted; for we winded them by our noses—their *perfumes* betrayed them. The *Husband* and the *Lover*, though of more dignity than the Castor, are images too domestick to mingle properly with the horrors of war. The two quatrains that follow are worthy of the author.

The account of the different sensations with which the two fleets retired, when the night parted them, is one of the fairest flowers of English poetry.

The night comes on, we eager to pursue
 The combat still, and they asham'd to leave;
 'Till the last streaks of dying day withdrew,
 And doubtful moon-light did our rage deceive.

In th' English fleet each ship resounds with joy,
 And loud applause of their great leader's fame:
 In firey dreams the Dutch they still destroy,
 And, slumbering, smile at the imagin'd flame.

Not so the Holland fleet, who, tir'd and done,
 Stretch'd on their decks like weary oxen lie;
 Faint sweats all down their mighty members run,
 (Vast bulks, which little souls but ill supply.)

In

In dreams they fearful precipices tread,

Or, shipwreck'd, labour to some distant shore:

Or, in dark churches, walk among the dead;

They wake with horror, and dare sleep no more.

It is a general rule in poetry, that all appropriated terms of art should be sunk in general expressions, because poetry is to speak an universal language. This rule is still stronger with regard to arts not liberal, or confined to few, and therefore far removed from common knowledge; and of this kind, certainly, is technical navigation. Yet Dryden was of opinion, that a sea-fight ought to be described in the nautical language; "and certainly," says he, "as those, who in a logical disputation keep to general terms would hide a fallacy, so those who do it in poetical description would veil their ignorance."

Let us then appeal to experience; for by experience at last we learn as well what will please as what will profit. In the battle, his terms seem to have been blown away; but he deals them liberally in the dock:

So here some pick out bullets from the side,

Some drive old *okum* thro' each *scam* and rift;

Their left-hand does the *calking-iron* guide,

The rattling *mallet* with the right they lift.

With

With boiling pitch another near at hand
 (From friendly Sweden brought) the *seams in stops*;
 Which, well laid o'er, the salt-sea waves withstand,
 And shake them from the rising beak in drops.
 Some the *gall'd* ropes with dawby *marling* bind,
 Or fear-cloth masts with strong *tarpawling* coats:
 To try new *shrouds* one mounts into the wind,
 And one below, their ease or stiffness notes.

I suppose there is not one term which every reader does not wish away.

His digression to the original and progress of navigation, with his prospect of the advancement which it shall receive from the Royal Society, then newly instituted, may be considered as an example seldom equalled of seasonable excursion and artful return.

One line, however, leaves me discontented; he says, that by the help of the philosophers,

Instructed ships shall sail to quick commerce,
 By which remotest regions are allied.—

Which he is constrained to explain in a note
 “By a more exact measure of longitude.” It
 had better become Dryden's learning and genius
 to have laboured science into poetry, and
 have

have shewn, by explaining longitude, that verse did not refuse the ideas of philosophy.

His description of the Fire is painted by resolute meditation, out of a mind better formed to reason than to feel. The conflagration of a city, with all its tumults of concomitant distresses, is one of the most dreadful spectacles which this world can offer to human eyes; yet it seems to raise little emotion in the breast of the poet; he watches the flame coolly from street to street, with now a reflection, and now a simile, till at last he meets the king, for whom he makes a speech, rather tedious in a time so busy; and then follows again the progress of the fire.

There are, however, in this part some passages that deserve attention; as in the beginning:

The diligence of trades and noiseful gain
 And luxury more late asleep were laid!
 All was the night's, and in her silent reign
 No sound the rest of Nature did invade
 In this deep quiet—

The expression “All was the night's”
 is

is taken from Seneca, who remarks on Virgil's line,

Omnia noctis erant placida composita quiete,

that he might have concluded better,

Omnia noctis erant.

The following quatrain is vigorous and animated :

The ghosts of traytors from the bridge descend
 With bold fanatick spectres to rejoice ;
 About the fire into a dance they bend,
 And sing their sabbath notes with feeble voice.

His prediction of the improvements which shall be made in the new city is elegant and poetical, and, with an event which Poets cannot always boast, has been happily verified. The poem concludes with a simile that might have better been omitted.

Dryden, when he wrote this poem, seems not yet fully to have formed his versification, or settled his system of propriety.

From this time, he addicted himself almost wholly to the stage, "to which," says he, "my genius never much inclined me," merely

as the most profitable market for poetry. By writing tragedies in rhyme, he continued to improve his diction and his numbers. According to the opinion of *Harte*, who had studied his works with great attention, he settled his principles of versification in 1676, when he produced the play of *Aureng Zeb*; and according to his own account of the short time in which he wrote *Tyrannick Love*, and the *State of Innocence*, he soon obtained the full effect of diligence, and added facility to exactness.

Rhyme has been so long banished from the theatre, that we know not its effect upon the passions of an audience; but it has this convenience, that sentences stand more independent on each other, and striking passages are therefore easily selected and retained. Thus the description of Night in the *Indian Emperor*, and the rise and fall of empire in the *Conquest of Granada*, are more frequently repeated than any lines in *All for Love*, or *Don Sebastian*.

To search his plays for vigorous fallies, and sententious elegances, or to fix the dates of any little pieces which he wrote by chance, or by solicitation, were labour too tedious and minute.

His dramattick labours did not so wholly absorb his thoughts, but that he promulgated the laws of translation in a preface to the English Epistles of Ovid; one of which he translated himself, and another in conjunction with the earl of Mulgrave.

Abſalom and Achitophel is a work so well known, that particular criticism is superfluous. If it be considered as a poem political and controversial, it will be found to comprise all the excellences of which the subject is susceptible; acrimony of censure, elegance of praise, artful delineation of characters, variety and vigour of sentiment, happy turns of language, and pleasing harmony of numbers; and all these raised to such a height as can scarcely be found in any other English composition.

It is not, however, without faults; some lines are inelegant or improper, and too many are irreligiously licentious. The original structure of the poem was defective; allegories drawn to great length will always break; Charles could not run continually parallel with David.

The subject had likewise another inconvenience: it admitted little imagery or description,

tion, and a long poem of mere sentiments easily becomes tedious; though all the parts are forcible, and every line kindles new rapture, the reader, if not relieved by the interposition of something that soothes the fancy, grows weary of admiration, and defers the rest.

As an approach to historical truth was necessary, the action and catastrophe were not in the poet's power; there is therefore an unpleasing disproportion between the beginning and the end. We are alarmed by a faction formed out of many sects various in their principles, but agreeing in their purpose of mischief, formidable for their numbers, and strong by their supports, while the king's friends are few and weak. The chiefs on either part are set forth to view; but when expectation is at the height, the king makes a speech, and

Henceforth a series of new times began.

Who can forbear to think of an enchanted castle, with a wide moat and lofty battlements, walls of marble and gates of brass, which vanishes at once into air, when the destined knight blows his horn before it?

In the second part, written by *Tate*, there is a long insertion, which, for its poignancy of satire, exceeds any part of the former. Personal resentment, though no laudable motive to satire, can add great force to general principles. Self-love is a busy prompter.

The *Medal*, written upon the same principles with *Abraham and Achitophel*, but upon a narrower plan, gives less pleasure, though it discovers equal abilities in the writer. The superstructure cannot extend beyond the foundation; a single character or incident cannot furnish as many ideas, as a series of events, or multiplicity of agents. This poem therefore, since time has left it to itself, is not much read, nor perhaps generally understood; yet it abounds with touches both of humorous and serious satire. The picture of a man whose propensions to mischief are such, that his best actions are but inability of wickedness, is very skilfully delineated and strongly coloured:

Power was his aim: but, thrown from that pre-
tence,

The wretch turn'd loyal in his own defence,
And malice reconcil'd him to his Prince,

Him,

Him, in the anguish of his soul, he serv'd ;
Rewarded faster still than he deserv'd :
Behold him now exalted into trust ;
His counsels oft convenient, seldom just,
Ev'n in the most sincere advice he gave,
He had a grudging still to be a knave.
The frauds, he learnt in his fanatic years,
Made him uneasy in his lawful gears,
At least as little honest as he cou'd,
And, like white witches, mischievously good.
To this first bias, longingly, he leans ;
And rather would be great by wicked means.

The *Threnodia*, which, by a term I am afraid neither authorized nor analogical, he calls *Augustalis*, is not among his happiest productions. Its first and obvious defect is the irregularity of its metre, to which the ears of that age, however, were accustomed. What is worse, it has neither tenderness nor dignity, it is neither magnificent nor pathetick. He seems to look round him for images which he cannot find, and what he has he distorts by endeavouring to enlarge them. "He is," he says, "petrified with grief," but the marble sometimes relents, and trickles in a joke.

The sons of art all med'cines try'd,
 And every noble remedy apply'd ;
 With emulation each essay'd
 His utmost skill ; *nay, more, they pray'd :*
 Was never losing game with better conduct play'd.

He had been a little inclined to merriment
 before, upon the prayers of a nation for their
 dying sovereign, nor was he serious enough to
 keep heathen fables out of his religion ;

With him th' innumerable crowd of armed
 prayers
 Knock'd at the gates of heaven, and knock'd
 aloud ;

The first well-meaning rude petitioners,
 All for his life assail'd the throne,
 All would have brib'd the skies by offering up
 their own.

So great a throng not heaven itself could bar ;
 'Twas almost borne by force *as in the giants war.*

The prayers, at least, for his reprieve were
 heard ;

His death, like Hezekiah's, was deferr'd.

There is throughout the composition a desire of splendor without wealth. In the conclusion he seems too much pleased with the
 pro-

prospect of the new reign to have lamented his old master with much sincerity.

He did not miscarry in this attempt for want of skill either in lyrick or elegiack poetry. His poem on the Death of Mrs. *Killegrew* is undoubtedly the noblest ode that our language ever has produced. The first part flows with a torrent of enthusiasm. "Fervet immensusque ruit." All the stanzas indeed are not equal. An imperial crown cannot be one continued diamond; the gems must be held together by some less valuable matter.

In his first ode for Cecilia's day, which is lost in the splendor of the second, there are passages which would have dignified any other poet. The first stanza is vigorous and elegant, though the word *diapason* is too technical, and the rhymes are too remote from one another:

From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
 This universal frame began :
 When nature underneath a heap of jarring atoms
 lay,
 And could not heave her head,
 The tuneful voice was heard from high,
 Arise ye more than dead.
 Then cold and hot, and moist and dry,

In order to their stations leap,
 And musick's power obey.
 From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
 This universal frame began :
 From harmony to harmony
 Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
 The diapason closing full in man.

The conclusion is likewise striking, but it includes an image so awful in itself, that it can owe little to poetry ; and I could wish the antithesis of *musick untuning* had found some other place.

As from the power of sacred lays
 The spheres began to move,
 And sung the great Creator's praise
 To all the blest above :
 So when the last and dreadful hour
 This crumbling pageant shall devour,
 The trumpet shall be heard on high,
 The dead shall live, the living die,
 And musick shall untune the sky.

Of his skill in Elegy he has given a specimen in his *Eleonora*, of which the following lines discover their author :

Though all these rare endowments of the mind
 Were in a narrow space of life confin'd,

The

The figure was with full perfection crown'd ;
 Though not so large an orb, as truly round :
 As when in glory, through the public place,
 The spoils of conquer'd nations were to pass,
 And but one day for triumph was allow'd,
 The consul was constrain'd his pomp to crowd ;
 And so the swift procession hurry'd on,
 That all, though not distinctly, might be shown :
 So in the straiten'd bounds of life confin'd,
 She gave but glimpses of her glorious mind :
 And multitudes of virtues pass'd along ;
 Each pressing foremost in the mighty throng,
 Ambitious to be seen, and then make room
 For greater multitudes that were to come.
 Yet unemployed no minute slipp'd away ;
 Moments were precious in so short a stay.
 The haste of heaven to have her was so great,
 That some were single acts, though each com-
 pleat ;
 And every act stood ready to repeat.

This piece, however, is not without its faults ; there is so much likeness in the initial comparison, that there is no illustration. As a king would be lamented, Eleonora was lamented :

As when some great and gracious monarch dies,
 Soft whispers, first, and mournful murmurs, rise
 Among

Among the sad attendants ; then the sound
 Soon gathers voice, and spreads the news around,
 Through town and country, till the dreadful blast
 Is blown to distant colonies at last ;
 Who, then, perhaps, were offering vows in vain,
 For his long life, and for his happy reign ;
 So slowly by degrees, unwilling fame
 Did matchless Eleonora's fate proclaim,
 Till publick as the loss the news became.

This is little better than to say in praise of a
 shrub, that it is as green as a tree ; or of a
 brook, that it waters a garden, as a river wa-
 ters a country.

Dryden confesses that he did not know the
 lady whom he celebrates : the praise being
 therefore inevitably general, fixes no impression
 upon the reader, nor excites any tendency to
 love, nor much desire of imitation. Know-
 ledge of the subject is to the poet, what dura-
 ble materials are to the architect.

The *Religio Laici*, which borrows its title
 from the *Religio Medici* of Browne, is almost
 the only work of Dryden which can be confi-
 dered as a voluntary effusion ; in this, there-
 fore, it might be hoped, that the full efful-
 gence of his genius would be found. But un-
 happily

happily the subject is rather argumentative than poetical: he intended only a specimen of metrical disputation.

And this unpolish'd rugged verse I chose,
As fittest for discourse, and nearest prose.

This, however, is a composition of great excellence in its kind, in which the familiar is very properly diversified with the solemn, and the grave with the humorous; in which metre has neither weakened the force, nor clouded the perspicuity of argument; nor will it be easy to find another example equally happy of this middle kind of writing, which, though prosaick in some parts, rises to high poetry in others, and neither towers to the skies, nor creeps along the ground.

Of the same kind, or not far distant from it, is the *Hind and Panther*, the longest of all Dryden's original poems; an allegory intended to comprize and to decide the controversy between the Romanists and Protestants. The scheme of the work is injudicious and incommodious, for what can be more absurd than that one beast should counsel another to rest her faith upon a pope and council? He seems well
enough

enough skilled in the usual topicks of argument, endeavours to shew the necessity of an infallible judge, and reproaches the Reformers with want of unity; but is weak enough to ask why, since we see without knowing how, we may not have an infallible judge without knowing where.

The *Hind* at one time is afraid to drink at the common brook, because she may be worried; but walking home with the *Panther*, talks by the way of the *Nicene Fathers*, and at last declares herself to be the Catholic church.

This absurdity was very properly ridiculed in the *City Mouse* and *Country Mouse* of *Montague* and *Prior*; and in the detection and censure of the incongruity of the fiction chiefly consists the value of their performance, which, whatever reputation it might obtain by the help of temporary passions, seems, to readers almost a century distant, not very forcible or animated.

Pope, whose judgement was perhaps a little bribed by the subject, used to mention this poem as the most correct specimen of Dryden's versification. It was indeed written when he had completely formed his manner, and may be
be

be supposed to exhibit, negligence excepted, his deliberate and ultimate scheme of metre.

We may therefore reasonably infer, that he did not approve the perpetual uniformity which confines the sense to couplets, since he has broken his lines in the initial paragraph.

A milk-white Hind, immortal and unchang'd,
Fed on the lawns, and in the forest rang'd:
Without unspotted, innocent within,
She fear'd no danger, for she knew no sin.
Yet had she oft been chac'd with horns and hounds,
And Scythian shafts, and many winged wounds
Aim'd at her heart; was often forc'd to fly,
And doom'd to death, though fated not to die.

These lines are lofty, elegant, and musical, notwithstanding the interruption of the pause, of which the effect is rather increase of pleasure by variety, than offence by ruggedness.

To the first part it was his intention, he says, "to give the majestick turn of heroick poesy;" and perhaps he might have executed his design not unsuccessfully, had not an opportunity of satire, which he cannot forbear, fallen sometimes in his way. The character of a Presbyterian, whose emblem is the *Wolf*, is not very heroically majestick:

More

Strike in the dark, offending but by chance ;
 Such are the blindfold blows of ignorance.
 They know not beings, and but hate a name ;
 To them the Hind and Panther are the same.

One more instance, and that taken from the narrative part, where style was more in his choice, will show how steadily he kept his resolution of heroic dignity.

For when the herd, suffic'd, did late repair
 To ferney heaths and to their forest laire,
 She made a mannerly excuse to stay,
 Proffering the Hind to wait her half the way :
 That, since the sky was clear, an hour of talk
 Might help her to beguile the tedious walk.
 With much good-will the motion was embrac'd,
 To chat awhile on their adventures past :
 Nor had the grateful Hind so soon forgot
 Her friend and fellow-sufferer in the plot.
 Yet, wondering how of late she grew estrang'd,
 Her forehead cloudy and her count'nance chang'd,
 She thought this hour th' occasion would present
 To learn her secret cause of discontent,
 Which well she hop'd might be with ease redress'd,
 Considering her a well-bred civil beast,
 And more a gentlewoman than the rest.

}
 Ar-

After some common talk what rumours ran,
The lady of the spotted muff began.

The second and third parts he professes to have reduced to diction more familiar and more suitable to dispute and conversation; the difference is not, however, very easily perceived; the first has familiar, and the two others have sonorous, lines. The original incongruity runs through the whole; the king is now *Cæsar*, and now the *Lyon*; and the name *Pan* is given to the Supreme Being.

But when this constitutional absurdity is forgiven, the poem must be confessed to be written with great smoothness of metre, a wide extent of knowledge, and an abundant multiplicity of images; the controversy is embellished with pointed sentences, diversified by illustrations, and enlivened by sallies of invective. Some of the facts to which allusions are made are now become obscure, and perhaps there may be many satirical passages little understood.

As it was by its nature a work of defiance, a composition which would naturally be examined with the utmost acrimony of criticism, it was probably laboured with uncommon attention;

tion; and there are, indeed, few negligences in the subordinate parts. The original impropriety, and the subsequent unpopularity of the subject, added to the ridiculousness of its first elements, has sunk it into neglect; but it may be usefully studied, as an example of poetical ratiocination, in which the argument offers little from the metre.

In the poem on *the Birth of the Prince of Wales*, nothing is very remarkable but the exorbitant adulation, and that insensibility of the precipice on which the king was then standing, which the laureat apparently shared with the rest of the courtiers. A few months cured him of controversy, dismissed him from court, and made him again a play-wright and translator.

Of Juvenal there had been a translation by Stapylton, and another by Holiday; neither of them is very poetical. Stapylton is more smooth, and Holiday's is more esteemed for the learning of his notes. A new version was proposed to the poets of that time, and undertaken by them in conjunction. The main design was conducted by Dryden, whose reputa-

tion was such that no man was unwilling to serve the Muses under him.

The general character of this translation will be given, when it is said to preserve the wit, but to want the dignity of the original. The peculiarity of Juvenal is a mixture of gaiety and stateliness, of pointed sentences and declamatory grandeur. His points have not been neglected; but his grandeur none of the band seemed to consider as necessary to be imitated, except *Creech*, who undertook the thirteenth satire. It is therefore perhaps possible to give a better representation of that great satirist, even in those parts which Dryden himself has translated, some passages excepted, which will never be excelled.

With Juvenal was published Persius, translated wholly by Dryden. This work, though like all other productions of Dryden it may have shining parts, seems to have been written merely for wages, in an uniform mediocrity, without any eager endeavour after excellence, or laborious effort of the mind.

There wanders an opinion among the readers of poetry, that one of these satires is an exercise of the school. Dryden says, that he once translated

translated it at school; but not that he preserved or published the juvenile performance.

Nor long afterwards he undertook perhaps the most arduous work of its kind, a translation of Virgil, for which he had shewn how well he was qualified by his version of the *Pollio*, and two episodes, one of *Nifus* and *Euryalus*, the other of *Mezentius* and *Lausus*.

In the comparison of Homer and Virgil, the discriminative excellence of Homer is elevation and comprehension of thought, and that of Virgil is grace and splendor of diction. The beauties of Homer are therefore difficult to be lost, and those of Virgil difficult to be retained. The massy trunk of sentiment is safe by its solidity, but the blossoms of elocution easily drop away. The author, having the choice of his own images, selects those which he can best adorn; the translator must, at all hazards, follow his original, and express thoughts which perhaps he would not have chosen. When to this primary difficulty is added the inconvenience of a language so much inferior in harmony to the Latin, it cannot be expected that they who read the *Georgick* and the *Eneid* should be much delighted with any version.

All these obstacles Dryden saw, and all these he determined to encounter. The expectation of his work was undoubtedly great; the nation considered its honour as interested in the event. One gave him the different editions of his author, another helped him in the subordinate parts. The arguments of the several books were given him by Addison.

The hopes of the publick were not disappointed. He produced, says Pope, "the most noble and spirited translation that I know in any language." It certainly excelled whatever had appeared in English, and appears to have satisfied his friends, and, for the most part, to have silenced his enemies. Milbourne, indeed, a clergyman, attacked it; but his outrages seem to be the ebullitions of a mind agitated by stronger resentment than bad poetry can excite, and previously resolved not to be pleased.

His criticism extends only to the Preface, Pastorals, and Georgicks; and, as he professes to give his antagonist an opportunity of reprisal, he has added his own version of the first and fourth Pastorals, and the first Georgick. The world has forgotten his book; but since
his

his attempt has given him a place in literary history, I will preserve a specimen of his criticism, by inserting his remarks on the invocation before the first Georgick, and of his poetry, by annexing his own version.

Ver. 1.

“What makes a plenteous harvest, when to turn
“The fruitful soil, and when to sow the corn.

“It’s *unlucky*, they say, *to stumble at the thresh-*
“*hold*, but what has a *plenteous harvest* to do
“here? *Virgil* would not pretend to prescribe
“*rules* for *that* which depends not on the *hus-*
“*bandman’s* care, but the *disposition of Heaven*
“altogether. Indeed, the *plenteous crop* de-
“pends somewhat on the *good method of tillage*,
“and where the *land’s* ill manur’d, the *corn*,
“without a miracle, can be but *indifferent*; but
“the *harvest* may be *good*, which is its *propereſt*
“epithet, tho’ the *husbandman’s skill* were never
“so *indifferent*. The next sentence is *too literal*,
“and *when to plough* had been *Virgil’s* meaning,
“and intelligible to every body; and *when to*
“*sow the corn*, is a needless addition.”

Ver. 3.

“The care of sheep, of oxen, and of kine,
 “And when to geld the lambs, and shear the swine,
 “Would as well have fallen under the *cura bo-*
 “*um, qui cultus habendo fit pecori*, as Mr. D’s
 “*deduction* of particulars.”

Ver. 5.

“The birth and genius of the frugal bee
 “I sing, Mæcenæ, and I sing to thee.
 “But where did *experientia* ever signify *birth*
 “*and genius*? or what ground was there for
 “such a *figure* in this place? How much more
 “manly is Mr. Ogyly’s version!
 “What makes rich grounds, in what celestial signs
 “’Tis good to plough, and marry elms with vines;
 “What best fits cattle, what with sheep agrees,
 “And several arts improving frugal bees,
 “I sing, Mæcenæ,
 “Which four lines, tho’ faulty enough, are
 “yet much more to the purpose than Mr. D’s
 “fix.”

Ver. 22.

“From fields and mountains to my song repair.
 “For

“ For *patrium linquens nemus, saltusque Lycæi*—

“ Very well explained !”

Ver. 23, 24.

“ Inventor Pallas, of the fattening oil,

“ Thou founder of the plough, and ploughman’s

“ toil !

“ Written as if *these* had been *Pallas’s invention*.

“ *The ploughman’s toil’s* impertinent.”

Ver. 25.

“ ——— The shroud-like cypress ———

“ Why *shroud-like* ? Is a *cypress* pulled up by

“ the *roots*, which the *sculpture* in the *last Ec-*

“ *logue* fills *Silvanus’s* hand with, so very like a

“ *shroud* ? Or did not Mr. *D.* think of that

“ kind of *cypress* us’d often for *scarves* and *hat-*

“ *bands* at funerals formerly, or for *widows’*

“ *vails*, &c. if so, ’twas a *deep good thought*.”

Ver. 26.

“ ——— That wear

“ The royal honours, and increase the year.

“ What’s meant by *increasing the year* ? Did the

“ *gods* or *goddesses* add more *months*, or *days*, or

T 4

“ *hours*

“ *hours* to it? Or how can *arva tueri*—signify
 “ to wear rural honours? Is this to *translate*, or
 “ abuse an author? The next *couplet* is borrow’d
 “ from *Ogylby*, I suppose, because *less* to the
 “ purpose than ordinary.”

Ver. 33.

“ The patron of the world, and Rome’s peculiar
 “ guard.

“ *Idle*, and none of *Virgil’s*, no more than the
 “ sense of the *precedent couplet*; so again, he in-
 “ terpolates *Virgil* with that and *the round circle*
 “ of the year to guide powerful of blessings, which
 “ thou strew’st around. A ridiculous *Latinism*,
 “ and an *impertinent addition*; indeed the whole
 “ period is but one piece of *absurdity* and non-
 “ sense, as those who lay it with the *original*
 “ must find.”

Ver. 42, 43.

“ And Neptune shall resign the fasces of the sea.

“ Was he *consul* or *dictator* there?

“ And watry virgins for thy bed shall strive.

“ Both absurd *interpolations* ”

Ver.

Ver. 47, 48.

“Where in the void of heaven a place is free.

“*Ab happy, D——n, were that place for thee!*

“But where is *that void*? Or, what does our
“*translator* mean by it? He knows what *Ovid*
“says *God* did, to prevent such a *void* in hea-
“ven; perhaps, this was then forgotten: but
“*Virgil* talks more sensibly.”

Ver. 49.

“The scorpion ready to receive thy laws.

“No, he would not then have *gotten out of his*
“*way* so fast.”

Ver. 56.

“Though Proserpine affects her silent seat.

“What made *her* then so *angry* with *Ascalaphus*,
“for preventing her return? She was now
“mus’d to *Patience* under the *determinations* of
“*Fate*, rather than *fond* of her *residence*.”

Ver. 61, 62, 63.

“Pity the poet’s, and the ploughman’s cares,

“Interest thy greatness in our mean affairs,

“And use thyself betimes to hear our prayers.

“Which

“ Which is such a wretched *perversion* of *Virgil's*
 “ *noble thought* as *Vicars* would have blush'd at;
 “ but Mr. *Ogylby* makes us some amends, by
 “ his better lines :

“ O wheresoe'er thou art, from thence incline,
 “ And grant assistance to my bold design !
 “ Pity, with me, poor husbandmen's affairs,
 “ And now, as if translated, hear our prayers.

“ This is *sense*, and to the *purpose*: the other,
 “ poor *mistaken stuff*.”

Such were the strictures of Milbourne, who found few abettors; and of whom it may be reasonably imagined, that many who favoured his design were ashamed of his insolence.

When admiration had subsided, the translation was more coolly examined, and found, like all others, to be sometimes erroneous, and sometimes licentious. Those who could find faults, thought they could avoid them; and Dr. Brady attempted in blank verse a translation of the *Eneid*, which, when dragged into the world, did not live long enough to cry. I have never seen it; but that such a version there is, or has been, perhaps some old catalogue informed me.

With

With not much better success, Trapp, when his Tragedy and his Prelections had given him reputation, attempted another blank version of the Eneid; to which, notwithstanding the slight regard with which it was treated, he had afterwards perseverance enough to add the Eclogues and Georgicks. His book may continue its existence as long as it is the clandestine refuge of schoolboys.

Since the English ear has been accustomed to the melliflence of Pope's numbers, and the diction of poetry has become more splendid, new attempts have been made to translate Virgil; and all his works have been attempted by men better qualified to contend with Dryden. I will not engage myself in an invidious comparison, by opposing one passage to another; a work of which there would be no end, and which might be often offensive without use.

It is not by comparing line with line that the merit of great works is to be estimated, but by their general effects and ultimate result. It is easy to note a weak line, and write one more vigorous in its place; to find a happiness of expression in the original, and transplant it by force into the version: but what is given to
the

the parts may be subducted from the whole, and the reader may be weary, though the critic may commend. Works of imagination excel by their allurements and delight; by their power of attracting and detaining the attention. That book is good in vain, which the reader throws away. He only is the master, who keeps the mind in pleasing captivity; whose pages are perused with eagerness, and in hope of new pleasure are perused again; and whose conclusion is perceived with an eye of sorrow, such as the traveller casts upon departing day.

By his proportion of this predominance I will consent that Dryden should be tried; of this, which, in opposition to reason, makes Ariosto the darling and the pride of Italy; of this, which, in defiance of criticism, continues Shakspeare the sovereign of the drama.

His last work was his *Fables*, in which he gave us the first example of a mode of writing which the Italians call *refaccimento*, a renovation of ancient writers, by modernizing their language. Thus the old poem of *Boiardo* has been new-dressed by *Domenichi* and *Berni*. The works of Chaucer, upon which this kind of rejuvenescence has been bestowed by Dryden,

require little criticism. The tale of the Cock seems hardly worth revival; and the story of *Palamon* and *Arcite*, containing an action unsuitable to the times in which it is placed, can hardly be suffered to pass without censure of the hyperbolical commendation which Dryden has given it in the general Preface, and in a poetical Dedication, a piece where his original fondness of remote conceits seems to have revived.

Of the three pieces borrowed from Boccace *Sigismunda* may be defended by the celebrity of the story. *Theodore* and *Honorio*, though it contains not much moral, yet afforded opportunities of striking description. And *Cymon* was formerly a tale of such reputation, that, at the revival of letters, it was translated into Latin by one of the *Beroalds*.

Whatever subjects employed his pen, he was still improving our measures and embellishing our language.

In this volume are interspersed some short original poems, which, with his prologues, epilogues, and songs, may be comprised in Congreve's remark, that even those, if he had
written

written nothing else, would have entitled him to the praise of excellence in his kind.

One composition must however be distinguished. The ode for *St. Cecilia's Day*, perhaps the last effort of his poetry, has been always considered as exhibiting the highest flight of fancy, and the exactest nicety of art. This is allowed to stand without a rival. If indeed there is any excellence beyond it, in some other of Dryden's works that excellence must be found. Compared with the Ode on *Killigrew*, it may be pronounced perhaps superiour in the whole; but without any single part, equal to the first stanza of the other.

It is said to have cost Dryden a fortnight's labour; but it does not want its negligences: some of the lines are without correspondent rhymes; a defect, which I never detected but after an acquaintance of many years, and which the enthusiasm of the writer might hinder him from perceiving.

His last stanza has less emotion than the former; but it is not less elegant in the diction. The conclusion is vicious; the musick of *Timotheus*, which raised a mortal to the skies, had only a metaphorical power; that of *Cecilia*,
which

which *drew an angel down*, had a real effect: the crown therefore could not reasonably be divided.

IN a general survey of Dryden's labours, he appears to have a mind very comprehensive by nature, and much enriched with acquired knowledge. His compositions are the effects of a vigorous genius operating upon large materials.

The power that predominated in his intellectual operations, was rather strong reason than quick sensibility. Upon all occasions that were presented, he studied rather than felt, and produced sentiments not such as nature enforces, but meditation supplies. With the simple and elemental passions, as they spring separate in the mind, he seems not much acquainted; and seldom describes them but as they are complicated by the various relations of society, and confused in the tumults and agitations of life.

What he says of love may contribute to the explanation of his character:

Love various minds does variously inspire;
It stirs in gentle bosoms gentle fire,

Like

Like that of incense on the altar laid :
 But raging flames tempestuous souls invade ;
 A fire which every windy passion blows,
 With pride it mounts, or with revenge it glows.

Dryden's was not one of the *gentle bosoms* : Love, as it subsists in itself, with no tendency but to the person loved, and wishing only for correspondent kindness ; such love as shuts out all other interest, the Love of the Golden Age, was too soft and subtle to put his faculties in motion. He hardly conceived it but in its turbulent effervescence with some other desires ; when it was inflamed by rivalry, or obstructed by difficulties ; when it invigorated ambition, or exasperated revenge.

He is therefore, with all his variety of excellence, not often pathetick ; and had so little sensibility of the power of effusions purely natural, that he did not esteem them in others. Simplicity gave him no pleasure ; and for the first part of his life he looked on *Otway* with contempt, though at last, indeed very late, he confessed that in his play *there was Nature, which is the chief beauty.*

We do not always know our own motives. I am not certain whether it was not rather the difficulty

difficulty which he found in exhibiting the genuine operations of the heart, than a servile submission to an injudicious audience, that filled his plays with false magnificence. It was necessary to fix attention; and the mind can be captivated only by recollection, or by curiosity; by reviving natural sentiments, or impressing new appearances of things: sentences were readier at his call than images; he could more easily fill the ear with more splendid novelty, than awaken those ideas that slumber in the heart.

The favourite exercise of his mind was ratiocination; and, that argument might not be too soon at an end, he delighted to talk of liberty and necessity, destiny and contingency; these he discusses in the language of the school with so much profundity, that the terms which he uses are not always understood. It is indeed learning, but learning out of place.

When once he had engaged himself in disputation, thoughts flowed in on either side: he was now no longer at a loss; he had always objections and solutions at command; “verbaque provisam rem”—give him matter for

his verse, and he finds without difficulty verse for his matter.

In Comedy, for which he professes himself not naturally qualified, the mirth which he excites will perhaps not be found so much to arise from any original humour, or peculiarity of character nicely distinguished and diligently pursued, as from incidents and circumstances, artifices and surprizes; from jests of action rather than of sentiment. What he had of humorous or passionate, he seems to have had not from nature, but from other poets; if not always as a plagiarist, at least as an imitator.

Next to argument, his delight was in wild and daring sallies of sentiment, in the irregular and excentrick violence of wit. He delighted to tread upon the brink of meaning, where light and darkness begin to mingle; to approach the precipice of absurdity, and hover over the abyss of unideal vacancy. This inclination sometimes produced nonsense, which he knew; as,

Move swiftly, fun, and fly a lover's pace,
Leave weeks and months behind thee in thy race.

Amamel flies

To guard thee from the demons of the air;

My

My flaming sword above them to display,
All keen, and ground upon the edge of day.

And sometimes it issued in absurdities, of
which perhaps he was not conscious :

Then we upon our orb's last verge shall go,
And see the ocean leaning on the sky ;
From thence our rolling neighbours we shall know,
And on the lunar world securely pry.

These lines have no meaning ; but may we not
say, in imitation of Cowley on another book,

'Tis so like *sense* 'twill serve the turn as well ?

This endeavour after the grand and the new
produced many sentiments either great or bulky,
and many images either just or splendid :

I am as free as Nature first made man,
Ere the base laws of servitude began,
When wild in woods the noble savage ran.

}

—'Tis but because the Living death ne'er knew,
They fear to prove it as a thing that's new :
Let me th' experiment before you try,
I'll shew you first how easy 'tis to die.

—There with a forest of their darts he strove,
And stood like *Capaneus* defying Jove,

With his broad sword the boldest beating down,
 While Fate grew pale lest he should win the town,
 And turn'd the iron leaves of his dark book
 To make new dooms, or mend what it mistook.

—I beg no pity for this mouldering clay ;
 For if you give it burial, there it takes
 Possession of your earth ;
 If burnt, and scatter'd in the air, the winds
 That strew my dust diffuse my royalty,
 And spread me o'er your clime ; for where one
 atom

Of mine shall light, know there Sebastian reigns.

Of these quotations the two first may be allowed
 to be great, the two latter only tumid.

Of such selection there is no end. I will
 add only a few more passages ; of which the
 first, though it may perhaps be quite clear in
 prose, is not too obscure for poetry, as the
 meaning that it has is noble :

No, there is a necessity in Fate,
 Why still the brave bold man is fortunate ;
 He keeps his object ever full in sight,
 And that assurance holds him firm and right ;
 True, 'tis a narrow way that leads to bliss,
 But right before there is no precipice ;
 Fear makes men look aside, and so their foot-
 ing mis.

}
 Of

Of the images which the two following citations afford, the first is elegant, the second magnificent; whether either be just, let the reader judge:

What precious drops are these,
Which silently each other's track pursue,
Bright as young diamonds in their infant dew?

—Resign your castle—

—Enter, brave Sir; for, when you speak the word,
The gates shall open of their own accord;
The genius of the place its Lord shall meet,
And bow its towery forehead at your feet.

These bursts of extravagance, Dryden calls the “Dalilahs” of the Theatre; and owns that many noisy lines of Maximin and Almanzor call out for vengeance upon him; “but “I knew,” says he, “that they were bad “enough to please, even when I wrote them.” There is surely reason to suspect that he pleased himself as well as his audience; and that these, like the harlots of other men, had his love, though not his approbation.

He had sometimes faults of a less generous and splendid kind. He makes, like almost all other poets, very frequent use of mythology,

and sometimes connects religion and fable too closely without distinction.

He descends to display his knowledge with pedantick ostentation; as when, in translating Virgil, he says, “ tack to the larboard”—and “ veer starboard;” and talks, in another work, of “ virtue spooning before the wind.” His vanity now and then betrays his ignorance:

They Nature’s king through Nature’s opticks
view’d;

Revers’d they view’d him lessen’d to their eyes.

He had heard of reversing a telescope, and unluckily reverses the object.

He is sometimes unexpectedly mean. When he describes the Supreme Being as moved by prayer to stop the Fire of London, what is his expression?

A hollow crystal pyramid he takes,
In firmamental waters dipp’d above,
Of this a broad *extinguisher* he makes,
And *boodys* the flames that to their quarry strove.

When he describes the Last Day, and the decisive tribunal, he intermingles this image:

When

When rattling bones together fly,
From the four quarters of the sky.

It was indeed never in his power to resist the temptation of a jest. In his Elegy on Cromwell:

No sooner was the Frenchman's cause embrac'd,
Than the *light Monsieur* the *grave Don* outweigh'd;
His fortune turn'd the scale——

He had a vanity, unworthy of his abilities, to shew, as may be suspected, the rank of the company with whom he lived, by the use of French words, which had then crept into conversation; such as *fraicheur* for *coolness*, *fougue* for *turbulence*, and a few more, none of which the language has incorporated or retained. They continue only where they stood first, perpetual warnings to future innovators.

These are his faults of affectation; his faults of negligence are beyond recital. Such is the unevenness of his compositions, that ten lines are seldom found together, without something of which the reader is ashamed. Dryden was no rigid judge of his own pages; he seldom struggled after supreme excellence, but snatched

in hafte what was within his reach; and when he could content others, was himfelf contented. He did not keep prefent to his mind an idea of pure perfection; nor compare his works, fuch as they were, with what they might be made. He knew to whom he fhould be oppofed. He had more mufick than Waller, more vigour than Denham, and more nature than Cowley; and from his contemporaries he was in no danger. Standing therefore in the higheft place, he had no care to rife by contending with himfelf; but, while there was no name above his own, was willing to enjoy fame on the eafieft terms.

He was no lover of labour. What he thought fufficient, he did not flop to make better; and allowed himfelf to leave many parts unfinished, in confidence that the good lines would overbalance the bad. What he had once written, he difmiffed from his thoughts: and, I believe, there is no example to be found of any correction or improvement made by him after publication. The hafte of his productions might be the effect of neceffity; but his fubfequent neglect could hardly have any other caufe than impatience of ftudy.

What

What can be said of his versification will be little more than a dilatation of the praise given it by Pope :

Waller was smooth ; but Dryden taught to	}
join	
The varying verse, the full-resounding line, The long majestic march, and energy divine.	

Some improvements had been already made in English numbers ; but the full force of our language was not yet felt ; the verse that was smooth was commonly feeble. If Cowley had sometimes a finished line, he had it by chance. Dryden knew how to chuse the flowing and the sonorous words ; to vary the pauses, and adjust the accents ; to diversify the cadence, and yet preserve the smoothness of his metre.

Of Triplets and Alexandrines, though he did not introduce the use, he established it. The triplet has long subsisted among us. Dryden seems not to have traced it higher than to Chapman's Homer ; but it is to be found in Phaer's Virgil, written in the reign of Mary ; and in Hall's Satires, published five years before the death of Elizabeth.

The

The Alexandrine was, I believe, first used by Spenser, for the sake of closing his stanza with a fuller sound. We had a longer measure of fourteen syllables, into which the Eneid was translated by Phaer, and other works of the ancients by other writers; of which Chapman's Iliad was, I believe, the last.

The two first line's of *Phaer's* third Eneid will exemplify this measure:

When Asia's state was overthrown, and Priam's
kingdom stout,
All guiltless, by the power of gods above was
rooted out.

As these lines had their break, or *cæsura*, always at the eighth syllable, it was thought, in time, commodious to divide them; and quatrains of lines, alternately, consisting of eight and six syllables, make the most soft and pleasing of our lyrick measures; as,

Relentless Time, destroying power,
Which stone and brass obey,
Who giv'st to every flying hour
To work some new decay.

In

In the Alexandrine, when its power was once felt, some poems, as *Drayton's Polyolbion*, were wholly written; and sometimes the measures of twelve and fourteen syllables were interchanged with one another. Cowley was the first that inserted the Alexandrine at pleasure among the heroick lines of ten syllables, and from him Dryden professes to have adopted it.

The Triplet and Alexandrine are not universally approved. *Swift* always censured them, and wrote some lines to ridicule them. In examining their propriety, it is to be considered that the essence of verse is regularity, and its ornament is variety. To write verse, is to dispose syllables and sounds harmonically by some known and settled rule; a rule however lax enough to substitute similitude for identity, to admit change without breach of order, and to relieve the ear without disappointing it. Thus a Latin hexameter is formed from dactyls and spondees differently combined; the English heroick admits of acute or grave syllables variously disposed. The Latin never deviates into seven feet, or exceeds the number of seventeen syllables; but the English Alexandrine breaks the lawful bounds, and surprises the
reader

reader with two syllables more than he expected.

The effect of the Triplet is the same: the ear has been accustomed to expect a new rhyme in every couplet; but is on a sudden surprized with three rhymes together, to which the reader could not accommodate his voice, did he not obtain notice of the change from the braces of the margins. Surely there is something unskilful in the necessity of such mechanical direction.

Considering the metrical art simply as a science, and consequently excluding all casualty, we must allow that Triplets and Alexandrines, inserted by caprice, are interruptions of that constancy to which science aspires. And though the variety which they produce may very justly be desired, yet, to make our poetry exact, there ought to be some stated mode of admitting them.

But till some such regulation can be formed, I wish them still to be retained in their present state. They are sometimes convenient to the poet. *Fenton* was of opinion, that Dryden was too liberal, and Pope too sparing, in their use.

The

The rhymes of Dryden are commonly just, and he valued himself for his readiness in finding them; but he is sometimes open to objection.

It is the common practice of our poets to end the second line with a weak or grave syllable :

Together o'er the Alps methinks we fly,
Fill'd with ideas of fair *Italy*.

Dryden sometimes puts the weak rhyme in the first :

Laugh, all the powers that favour *tyranny*,
And all the standing army of the sky.

Sometimes he concludes a period or paragraph with the first line of a couplet, which, though the French seem to do it without irregularity, always displeases in English poetry.

The Alexandrine, though much his favourite, is not always very diligently fabricated by him. It invariably requires a break at the sixth syllable; a rule which the modern French poets never violate, but which Dryden sometimes neglected :

And with paternal thunder vindicates his throne.

Of

Of Dryden's works it was said by Pope, that "he could select from them better specimens of every mode of poetry than any other English writer could supply." Perhaps no nation ever produced a writer that enriched his language with such variety of models. To him we owe the improvement, perhaps the completion of our metre, the refinement of our language, and much of the correctness of our sentiments. By him we were taught "fapere & fari," to think naturally and express forcibly. Though Davies has reasoned in rhyme before him, it may be perhaps maintained that he was the first who joined argument with poetry. He shewed us the true bounds of a translator's liberty. What was said of Rome, adorned by Augustus, may be applied by an easy metaphor to English poetry embellished by Dryden, "*lateritiam invenit, marmoream reliquit,*" He found it brick, and he left it marble.

THE invocation before the Georgicks is here inserted from Mr. Milbourne's version, that, according to his own proposal, his verses
may

may be compared with those which he censures.

What makes the richest *tilth*, beneath what signs
 To *plough*, and when to match your *elms* and *vines*;
 What care with *flocks* and what with *herds* agrees,
 And all the management of frugal *bees*;
 I sing, *Mæcenás*! Ye immensely clear,
 Vast orbs of light, which guide the rolling year;
Bacchus, and mother *Ceres*, if by you
 We fat'ning *corn* for hungry *mast* pursue,
 If, taught by you, we first the *cluster* press,
 And *thin cold streams* with *spriteley juice* refresh;
 Ye *fawns*, the present *numens* of the field,
Wood-nymphs and *fawns*, your kind assistance yield;
 Your gifts I sing: and thou, at whose fear'd stroke
 From rending earth the firey *courser* broke,
 Great *Neptune*, O assist my artful song;
 And thou to whom the woods and groves belong,
 Whose snowy heifers on her flow'ry plains
 In mighty herds the *Cæan Isle* maintains!
Pan, happy shepherd, if thy cares divine,
 E'er to improve thy *Mænalus* incline;
 Leave thy *Lycean wood* and *native grove*,
 And with thy lucky smiles our work approve;
 Be *Pallas* too, sweet-oil's inventor, kind;
 And he, who first the crooked *plough* design'd,
Sylvanus, god of all the woods, appear,
 Whose hands a new-drawn tender *gyphs* bear!

Ye

Ye *gods* and *goddeſſes*, who e'er with love
 Would guard our paſtures, and our fields improve;
 You, who new plants from unknown lands ſupply,
 And with condensing clouds obſcure the ſky,
 And drop them ſoftly thence in fruitful ſhowers;
 Aſſiſt my enterprize, ye gentle powers!

And thou, great *Cæſar*! though we know not yet
 Among what gods thou'lt fix thy lofty ſeat;
 Whether thou'lt be the kind *tutelar god*
 Of thy own *Rome*, or with thy awful nod
 Guide the vaſt world, while thy great hand
 ſhall bear
 The fruits and ſeaſons of the turning year,
 And thy bright brows thy mother's myrtles
 wear;

Whether thou'lt all the boundleſs ocean ſway,
 And ſea-men only to thyſelf ſhall pray,
Tbule, the fartheſt iſland, kneel to thee,
 And, that thou may'ſt her ſon by marriage be,
Tethys will for the happy purchaſe yield
 To make a *dowry* of her wat'ry field:
 Whether thou'lt add to heaven a *brighter ſign*,
 And o'er the *ſummer months* ſerenely ſhine;
 Where between *Cancer* and *Erigone*,
 There yet remains a ſpacious *room* for thee;
 Where the hot *Scorpion* too his arms declines,
 And more to thee than half his *arch* reſigns;

Whate'er

Whate'er thou'lt be ; for sure the realms below
 No just pretence to thy command can show :
 No such ambition sways thy vast desires,
 Though *Greece* her own *Elysian fields* admires.
 And now, at last, contented *Proserpine*
 Can all her mother's earnest prayers decline.
 Whate'er thou'lt be, O guide our gentle course,
 And with thy smiles our bold attempts enforce ;
 With me th' unknowing *rustics'* wants relieve,
 And, though on earth, our sacred vows receive !

Mr. DRYDEN, having received from
 Rymer his *Remarks on the Tragedies of the last*
Age, wrote observations on the blank leaves ;
 which, having been in the possession of Mr.
 Garrick, are by his favour communicated to
 the publick, that no particle of Dryden may
 be lost.

“ That we may the less wonder why pity and
 “ terror are not now the only springs on which
 “ our tragedies move, and that Shakspeare may
 “ be more excused, Rapin confesses that the
 “ French tragedies now all run on the *tendre* ;
 “ and gives the reason, because love is the
 “ passion which most predominates in our
 “ souls, and that therefore the passions re-
 “ presented become insipid, unless they are
 VOL. II. X “ conformable

“ conformable to the thoughts of the audi-
 “ ence. But it is to be concluded, that this
 “ passion works not now amongst the French
 “ so strongly as the other two did amongst the
 “ ancients. Amongst us, who have a stronger
 “ genius for writing, the operations from the
 “ writing are much stronger: for the raising
 “ of Shakspeare’s passions is more from the ex-
 “ cellency of the words and thoughts, than the
 “ justness of the occasion; and, if he has been
 “ able to pick single occasions, he has never
 “ founded the whole reasonably: yet, by
 “ the genius of poetry in writing, he has
 “ succeeded.

“ Rapin attributes more to the *dictio*, that
 “ is to the words and discourse of a tragedy,
 “ than Aristotle has done, who places them
 “ in the last rank of beauties; perhaps, only
 “ last in order, because they are the last pro-
 “ duct of the design, of the disposition or con-
 “ nection of its parts; of the characters, of
 “ the manners of those characters, and of the
 “ thoughts proceeding from those manners.
 “ Rapin’s words are remarkable: ’Tis not the
 “ admirable intrigue, the surprising events,
 “ and extraordinary incidents, that make the
 “ beauty

“ beauty of a tragedy; ’tis the discourses, when
“ they are natural and passionate: so are Shak-
“ speare’s.

“ The parts of a poem, tragick or heroick,
“ are,

“ 1. The fable itself.

“ 2. The order or manner of its contrivance,
“ in relation of the parts to the whole.

“ 3. The manners, or decency, of the cha-
“ racters, in speaking or acting what is proper
“ for them, and proper to be shewn by the
“ poet.

“ 4. The thoughts which express the man-
“ ners.

“ 5. The words which express those thoughts.

“ In the last of these, Homer excels Virgil;
“ Virgil all other ancient poets; and Shak-
“ speare all modern poets.

“ For the second of these, the order: the
“ meaning is, that a fable ought to have a be-
“ ginning, middle, and an end, all just and
“ natural; so that that part, *e. g.* which is the
“ middle, could not naturally be the beginning
“ or end, and so of the rest: all depend on one
“ another, like the links of a curious chain.
“ If terror and pity are only to be raised, cer-

“ tainly this author follows Aristotle’s rules,
 “ and Sophocles’ and Euripides’s example:
 “ but joy may be raised too, and that doubly;
 “ either by seeing a wicked man punished, or
 “ a good man at last fortunate; or perhaps in-
 “ dignation, to see wickedness prosperous, and
 “ goodness depressed: both these may be pro-
 “ fitable to the end of a tragedy, reformation
 “ of manners; but the last improperly, only
 “ as it begets pity in the audience: though
 “ Aristotle, I confess, places tragedies of this
 “ kind in the second form.

“ He who undertakes to answer this excel-
 “ lent critique of Mr. Rymer, in behalf of our
 “ English poets against the Greek, ought to
 “ do it in this manner. Either by yielding to
 “ him the greatest part of what he contends
 “ for, which consists in this, that the *μύθος*,
 “ *i. e.* the design and conduct of it, is more
 “ conducing in the Greeks to those ends of
 “ tragedy, which Aristotle and he propose,
 “ namely, to cause terror and pity: yet the
 “ granting this does not set the Greeks above
 “ the English poets.

“ But the answerer ought to prove two
 “ things: first, that the fable is not the
 “ greatest

“greatest master-piece of a tragedy, though
“it be the foundation of it.

“Secondly, That other ends as suitable to
“the nature of tragedy may be found in the
“English, which were not in the Greek.

“Aristotle places the fable first; not *quoad*
“*dignitatem, sed quoad fundamentum*: for a fable,
“never so movingly contrived to those ends of
“his, pity and terror, will operate nothing
“on our affections, except the characters,
“manners, thoughts, and words, are suitable.
“able.

“So that it remains for Mr. Rymer to prove,
“that in all those, or the greatest part of them,
“we are inferior to Sophocles and Euripides:
“and this he has offered at, in some measure;
“but, I think, a little partially to the ancients.

“For the fable itself; 'tis in the English
“more adorned with Episodes, and larger
“than in the Greek poets; consequently more
“diverting. For, if the action be but one,
“and that plain, without any counterturn of
“design or episode, *i. e.* under plot, how can
“it be so pleasing as the English, which have
“both under-plot and a turned design, which

“ keeps the audience in expectation of the
 “ catastrophe? whereas in the Greek poets we
 “ see through the whole design at first.

“ For the characters, they are neither so
 “ many nor so various in Sophocles and Euri-
 “ pides, as in Shakspeare and Fletcher; only
 “ they are more adapted to those ends of tra-
 “ gedy which Aristotle commends to us, pity
 “ and terror.

“ The manners flow from the characters,
 “ and consequently must partake of their ad-
 “ vantages and disadvantages.

“ The thoughts and words, which are the
 “ fourth and fifth beauties of tragedy, are cer-
 “ tainly more noble and more poetical in
 “ the English than in the Greek, which must
 “ be proved by comparing them, somewhat
 “ more equitably than Mr. Rymer has done.

“ After all, we need not yield that the Eng-
 “ lish way is less conducing to move pity
 “ and terror, because they often shew virtue
 “ oppressed and vice punished; where they do
 “ not both, or either, they are not to be de-
 “ fended.

“ And if we should grant that the Greeks
 “ performed this better, perhaps it may ad-
 “ mit

“ mit of dispute, whether pity and terror are
“ either the prime, or at least the only ends of
“ tragedy.

“ ’Tis not enough that Aristotle has said so;
“ for Aristotle drew his models of tragedy from
“ Sophocles and Euripides; and, if he had seen
“ ours, might have changed his mind. And
“ chiefly we have to say (what I hinted on
“ pity and terror, in the last paragraph save
“ one), that the punishment of vice and re-
“ ward of virtue are the most adequate ends of
“ tragedy, because most conducing to good
“ example of life. Now, pity is not so easily
“ raised for a criminal (and the ancient tragedy
“ always represents its chief person such), as it
“ is for an innocent man; and the suffering of
“ innocence and punishment of the offender is
“ of the nature of English tragedy, contrarily,
“ in the Greek, innocence is unhappy often,
“ and the offender escapes. Then we are not
“ touched with the sufferings of any sort of
“ men so much as of lovers; and this was al-
“ most unknown to the ancients; so that they
“ neither administered poetical justice, of which
“ Mr. Rymer boasts, so well as we: neither

“ knew they the best common place of pity,
“ which is love.

“ He therefore unjustly blames us for not
“ building on what the ancients left us; for it
“ seems, upon consideration of the premises,
“ that we have wholly finished what they
“ began.

“ My judgement on this piece is this, that
“ it is extremely learned; but that the author
“ of it is better read in the Greek than in the
“ English poets; that all writers ought to
“ study this critique, as the best account I
“ have ever seen of the ancients; that the mo-
“ del of tragedy, he has here given, is excellent,
“ and extreme correct; but that it is not the only
“ model of all tragedy, because it is too much
“ circumscribed in plot, characters, &c.; and,
“ lastly, that we may be taught here justly
“ to admire and imitate the ancients, without
“ giving them the preference with this author,
“ in prejudice to our own country.

“ Want of method in this excellent treatise
“ makes the thoughts of the author sometimes
“ obscure.

“ His meaning, that pity and terror are to
“ be moved, is, that they are to be moved

“ as

“ as the means conducing to the ends of tragedy, which are pleasure and instruction.

“ And these two ends may be thus distinguished. The chief end of the poet is to please ; for his immediate reputation depends on it.

“ The great end of the poem is to instruct, which is performed by making pleasure the vehicle of that instruction ; for poesy is an art, and all arts are made to profit. *Rapin.*

“ The pity, which the poet is to labour for, is for the criminal, not for those or him whom he has murdered, or who have been the occasion of the tragedy. The terror is likewise in the punishment of the same criminal ; who, if he be represented too great an offender, will not be pitied : if altogether innocent, his punishment will be unjust.

“ Another obscurity is, where he says Sophocles perfected tragedy by introducing the third actor : that is, he meant three kinds of action ; one company singing, or another playing on the musick ; a third dancing.

“ To

“ To make a true judgement in this compe-
“ tition betwixt the Greek poets and the Eng-
“ lish, in tragedy :

“ Consider, first, how Aristotle had defined
“ a tragedy. Secondly, what he assigns the end
“ of it to be. Thirdly, what he thinks the
“ beauties of it. Fourthly, the means to attain
“ the end proposed.

“ Compare the Greek and English tragick
“ poets justly, and without partiality, accord-
“ ing to those rules.

“ Then, secondly, consider whether Ari-
“ stotle has made a just definition of tragedy ;
“ of its parts, of its ends, and of its beauties ;
“ and whether he, having not seen any others
“ but those of Sophocles, Euripides, &c. had
“ or truly could determine what all the ex-
“ cellences of tragedy are, and wherein they
“ consist.

“ Next, shew in what ancient tragedy was
“ deficient : for example, in the narrowness of
“ its plots, and fewness of persons, and try
“ whether that be not a fault in the Greek
“ poets, and whether their excellency was so
“ great, when the variety was visibly so little ;

“ or

“ or whether what they did was not very easy
“ to do.

“ Then make a judgement on what the Eng-
“ lish have added to their beauties : as, for ex-
“ ample, not only more plot, but also new
“ passions : as, namely, that of love, scarce
“ touched on by the ancients, except in this
“ one example of Phædra, cited by Mr. Ry-
“ mer; and in that how short they were of Flet-
“ cher !

“ Prove also that love, being an heroick
“ passion, is fit for tragedy, which cannot be
“ denied, because of the example alledged of
“ Phædra; and how far Shakspeare has outdone
“ them in friendship, &c.

“ To return to the beginning of this en-
“ quiry ; consider if pity and terror be enough
“ for tragedy to move : and I believe, upon a
“ true definition of tragedy, it will be found
“ that its work extends farther, and that it is
“ to reform manners, by a delightful represen-
“ tation of human life in great persons, by
“ way of dialogue. If this be true, then not
“ only pity and terror are to be moved, as the
“ only means to bring us to virtue, but ge-
“ nerally love to virtue, and hatred to vice :
“ by

“ by shewing the rewards of one, and punish-
“ ments of the other; at least, by rendering
“ virtue always amiable, tho’ it be shewn un-
“ fortunate; and vice detestable, though it be
“ shewn triumphant.

“ If, then, the encouragement of virtue and
“ discouragement of vice be the proper ends of
“ poetry in tragedy, pity and terror, though
“ good means, are not the only. For all the
“ passions, in their turns, are to be set in a
“ ferment: as joy, anger, love, fear, are to
“ be used as the poet’s common-places; and a
“ general concernment for the principal actors
“ is to be raised, by making them appear such
“ in the characters, their words, and actions,
“ as will interest the audience in their fortunes.

“ And if, after all, in a larger sense, pity
“ comprehends this concernment for the good,
“ and terror includes detestation for the bad,
“ then let us consider whether the English have
“ not answered this end of tragedy, as well as
“ the ancients, or perhaps better.

“ And here Mr. Rymer’s objections against
“ these plays are to be impartially weighed,
“ that we may see whether they are of weight
“ enough

“ enough to turn the balance against our coun-
 “ trymen.

“ ’Tis evident those plays, which he ar-
 “ raigns, have moved both those passions in
 “ a high degree upon the stage.

“ To give the glory of this away from the
 “ poet, and to place it upon the actors, seems
 “ unjust.

“ One reason is, because whatever actors
 “ they have found, the event has been the
 “ same; that is, the same passions have been
 “ always moved; which shews that there is
 “ something of force and merit in the plays
 “ themselves, conducing to the design of rais-
 “ ing these two passions: and suppose them
 “ ever to have been excellently acted, yet ac-
 “ tion only adds grace, vigour, and more life,
 “ upon the stage; but cannot give it wholly
 “ where it is not first. But, secondly, I dare
 “ appeal to those who have never seen them
 “ acted, if they have not found these two pas-
 “ sions moved within them: and if the general
 “ voice will carry it, Mr. Rymer’s prejudice
 “ will take off his single testimony.

“ This, being matter of fact, is reasonably
 “ to be established by this appeal; as if one
 “ man

“ man says ’tis night, the rest of the world
“ conclude it to be day; there needs no farther
“ argument against him, that it is so.

“ If he urge, that the general taste is de-
“ praved, his arguments to prove this can at
“ best but evince that our poets took not the
“ best way to raise those passions; but expe-
“ rience proves against him, that these means,
“ which they have used, have been successful,
“ and have produced them.

“ And one reason of that success is, in my
“ opinion, this, that Shakspeare and Fletcher
“ have written to the genius of the age and
“ nation in which they lived; for though na-
“ ture, as he objects, is the same in all places,
“ and reason too the same; yet the climate, the
“ age, the disposition of the people, to whom
“ a poet writes, may be so different, that what
“ pleased the Greeks would not satisfy an
“ English audience.

“ And if they proceeded upon a foundation
“ of truer reason to please the Athenians, than
“ Shakspeare and Fletcher to please the English,
“ it only shews that the Athenians were a more
“ judicious people; but the poet’s business is
“ certainly to please the audience.

“ Whe-

“ Whether our English audience have been
“ pleased hitherto with acorns, as he calls it,
“ or with bread, is the next question ; that is,
“ whether the means which Shakspeare and
“ Fletcher have used in their plays to raise
“ those passions before named, be better ap-
“ plied to the ends by the Greek poets than by
“ them. And perhaps we shall not grant him
“ this wholly : let it be granted that a writer is
“ not to run down with the stream, or to
“ please the people by their usual methods, but
“ rather to reform their judgements, it still re-
“ mains to prove that our theatre needs this
“ total reformation.

“ The faults, which he has found in their
“ designs, are rather wittily aggravated in many
“ places than reasonably urged ; and as much
“ may be returned on the Greeks, by one who
“ were as witty as himself.

“ 2. They destroy not, if they are granted,
“ the foundation of the fabrick ; only take
“ away from the beauty of the symmetry : for
“ example, the faults in the character of the
“ King in King and No-king are not, as he
“ calls them, such as render him detestable,
“ but only imperfections which accompany
“ hu-

“ human nature, and are for the most part ex-
“ cused by the violence of his love; so that
“ they destroy not our pity or concernment for
“ him: this answer may be applied to most of
“ his objections of that kind.

“ And Rollo committing many murders,
“ when he is answerable but for one, is too
“ severely arraigned by him; for it adds to our
“ horror and detestation of the criminal: and
“ poetick justice is not neglected neither; for
“ we stab him in our minds for every offence
“ which he commits; and the point which the
“ poet is to gain on the audience, is not so
“ much in the death of an offender as the rais-
“ ing an horror of his crimes.

“ That the criminal should neither be whol-
“ ly guilty, nor wholly innocent, but so par-
“ ticipating of both as to move both pity and
“ terror, is certainly a good rule, but not per-
“ petually to be observed; for that were to
“ make all tragedies too much alike, which
“ objection he foresaw, but has not fully an-
“ swered.

“ To conclude, therefore: if the plays of
“ the ancients are more correctly plotted, ours
“ are more beautifully written. And if we can
“ raise

“ raise passions as high on worse foundations,
 “ it shews our genius in tragedy is greater; for
 “ in all other parts of it the English have ma-
 “ nifestly excelled them.”

THE original of the following letter is preserved in the Library at Lambeth, and was kindly imparted to the publick by the reverend Dr. Vyse.

Copy of an original Letter from John Dryden, Esq. to his sons in Italy, from a MS. in the Lambeth Library, marked N^o 933. p. 56.

(Superscribed)

“ Al Illustrissimo Sigre
 “ Carlo Dryden Camariere
 “ d'Honore A. S. S.

“ In Roma.

“ Franca per Mantoua.

“ Sept. the 3d, our style.

“ Dear Sons,

“ Being now at Sir William Bowyer's in
 “ the country, I cannot write at large, be-
 “ cause I find myself somewhat indisposed with
 “ a cold, and am thick of hearing, rather worse
 VOL. II. Y “ than

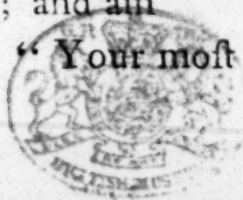
“ than I was in town. I am glad to find, by
“ your letter of July 26th, your style, that
“ you are both in health; but wonder you
“ should think me so negligent as to forget to
“ give you an account of the ship in which
“ your parcel is to come. I have written to
“ you two or three letters concerning it, which
“ I have sent by safe hands, as I told you, and
“ doubt not but you have them before this can
“ arrive to you. Being out of town, I have
“ forgotten the ship's name, which your mother
“ will enquire, and put it into her letter,
“ which is joined with mine. But the master's
“ name I remember: he is called Mr.
“ Ralph Thorp; the ship is bound to Leghorn,
“ consigned to Mr. Peter and Mr. Tho. Ball
“ merchants. I am of your opinion, that by
“ Tonson's means almost all our letters have
“ miscarried for this last year. But, however,
“ he has missed of his design in the Dedication,
“ though he had prepared the book for it; for
“ in every figure of Eneas he has caused him
“ to be drawn like King William, with a
“ hooked nose. After my return to town, I
“ intend to alter a play of Sir Robert Howard's
“ written long since, and lately put into my
“ hands:

“ hands: ’tis called *The conquest of China by the*
“ *Tartars*. It will cost me fix weeks study,
“ with the probable benefit of an hundred
“ pounds. In the mean time I am writing a
“ song for St. Cecilia’s Feast, who, you know,
“ is the patroness of musick. This is trouble-
“ some, and no way beneficial; but I could
“ not deny the Stewards of the Feast, who
“ came in a body to me to desire that kindness,
“ one of them being Mr. Bridgman, whose
“ parents are your mother’s friends. I hope
“ to send you thirty guineas between Michael-
“ mas and Christmases, of which I will give
“ you an account when I come to town. I
“ remember the counsel you give me in your
“ letter; but dissembling, though lawful in
“ some cases, is not my talent; yet, for your
“ sake, I will struggle with the plain openness
“ of my nature, and keep-in my just resent-
“ ments against that degenerate order. In the
“ mean time, I flatter not myself with any
“ manner of hopes, but do my duty, and suf-
“ fer for God’s sake; being assured, before-
“ hand, never to be rewarded, though the
“ times should alter. Towards the latter end
“ of this month, September, Charles will be-
“ gin

“ gin to recover his perfect health, according
“ to his nativity, which, casting it myself, I
“ am sure is true, and all things hitherto have
“ happened accordingly to the very time that
“ I predicted them: I hope at the same time
“ to recover more health, according to my
“ age. Remember me to poor Harry, whose
“ prayers I earnestly desire. My Virgil suc-
“ ceeds in the world beyond its desert or my
“ expectation. You know the profits might
“ have been more; but neither my conscience
“ nor my honour would suffer me to take
“ them: but I never can repent of my con-
“ stancy, since I am thoroughly persuaded of
“ the justice of the cause for which I suffer. It
“ has pleased God to raise up many friends to
“ me amongst my enemies, though they who
“ ought to have been my friends are negligent
“ of me. I am called to dinner, and cannot
“ go on with this letter, which I desire you to
“ excuse; and am

“ Your most affectionate father,

“ JOHN DRYDEN.”



END OF VOL. II.

